BUSINESS / B1
PLDT beats forecasts, nets P36B in 2007

LIFESTYLE / D1
Zobel sisters celebrate Filipino talent in Bravo Filipino

NEWS / A2
GMA signs into law Civil Aviation Authority Act; ATO out by May

ACROSS / A20
Floods isolate 11,000 Catanduanes families; aid awaited

Ex-officials list 5 things GMA must do, or else

By TJ Burgonio

A GROUP OF EX-GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS is giving President Macapagal-Arroyo a week to carry out its recommendations on how she should address the current political crisis, or face more street protests.

"The President must do these, or the people will make their judgment and act on the basis of their convictions," the former Senior Government Officials (SGO) said in a statement read by former

ESCALONA, A-11

Clinton racing to wind back doomsday clock

AUSTIN, TEXAS—A DAY BEFORE TUESDAY'S voting in five states that could seal her bid, White House dreams, Hillary Clinton and her troops waged a frenzied attempt to wind back the doomsday clock looking worried campaign.

She took a 90-minute rescue bid to come after a poor month for the 60-year-old one-time Democratic front-runner, sending their

CLINTON, A-11

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, March 5, 2008 | 44 | 10 sections | Vol. 22 / No. 89 | P18 | inquirer.net

Mike A answers 4 graft charges in ZTE deal

By Jocelyn R. Uy

AFTER MAKING HIMSELF scarce in the Senate inquiry into the scrapped $329-million broadband deal, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo appeared yesterday at the Office of the Ombudsman, which is conducting a parallel investigation of the contract, to refute the complaints filed against him.

The husband of President Macapagal-Arroyo is facing charges of graft, plunder, obstruction of justice and corruption of public officials in four of the seven ZTE-related complaints filed with the antigraft body as early as last September.

He was fled linked to the allegedly kickbacks and overpricing in the $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal in 2007 when businessman Jose de Venecia III, founder of a firm that failed to get the contract, testified in the Senate.

De Venecia claimed that Arroyo had told him to "back off" the NBN deal. The businessman also accused former election chief Benjamin Abalos Sr. of bringing up a bid commission for hearing the deal in behalf of Ge

ARROYO, A-11

THE WRITING ON THE WALL. As many would have it, First Gentleman Mike Arroyo at the Office of the Ombudsman is seated beside one of the posters by schoolchildren displayed on the walls which had won in an anticorruption contest sponsored by the antigraft court.

Neri to resume testimony

Madriaga wife: What life's like on the run with 7 kids

By Pennie Azarcon-dela Cruz
Executive editor, Sunday Inquirer Magazine

WHEN JULIE MADRIAGA SAW HER HUSBAND Jhun's mugshot at the Senate on the scrapped $329-million broadband deal on Tuesday last week, she was surprised and immediately stricken with guilt.

"We did not talk about that. But I guess the hardest had been was history for him so he had to unload it," she said in Pilipino.

"He looked so haggard. I wish I had been more receptive when he wanted to discuss the ZTE issue with me," Kilosi said. Instead, she said, she had nagged him about the family's dwindling finances and how he should do something about it.

"I even challenged him once," she recalled. "I told him, 'what if we trade places? I go out and work, and you stay home. Let's see if you can bear to see your children go hungry.'"

Her Madriaga's distraction, it seemed the height of clumsy that the man, who claimed to have earned at least P1M-00,000 a month from the ZTE project, had only P2K in his wallet when former Senate secretary Sandra Cam dropped him off in Mateo, Manila, the day before he walked to and testified in the Senate.

MADRIAGA, A-17

FROM RICHES TO RAGS: Madriaga earned P200,000 a (DOTC during Arroyo's tenure. At the time of his Senate testimony he had P2K in his pocket.

BACK HOME. Madriaga's wife Eileen had to tell the station's program host dinner for their 7 children ages 3 to 15. Now in a remote (an right), they look like refugees on the run. Eileen says, "Why would he risk his family if he's not telling the truth?"

SC justices say he can't invoke EO to hide crime

By Leila B. Salaverria and Jeannie Aning

A MARATHON SUPREME Court hearing last night hammered out an agreement that would allow former Director General Romulo Neri of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) to resume his testimony before the Senate on the scuttled broadband deal with China.

However, Neri, who was absent but was represented by lawyers during the Supreme Court hearing on his petition to stop the Senate from posing him on the witness stand again, would not be asked the three questions which he had refused to answer previously saying matters covered by executive privilege.

Neri's lawyers agreed to the compromise solution proposed by Chief Justice Reynato Puno, but Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee, told the court such or that he had to consult with other senators.

The justices, several senators and Neri's lawyers met behind

NERI, A-10

Assumption classmates ask GMA to dump EO 464

By Inquirer staff

IT'S NOT JUST THE SHROUD who are demanding it. Now, even President Macapagal-Arroyo's allies, including her former classmates, want her to abolish her controversial Executive Order No. 464.

Alumnae and former classmates of Ms Arroyo at Assumption College called on her to scrap her gag order on officials of the executive branch, the armed forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police invited to congressional hearings unless she ambushed it.

In a statement, the group asked the President to "unilaterally" cancel EO 464 and put a "halt to military and police activities such as illegal surveillance, wiretapping, cell phone bugging and other forms of intimidation."

"We make a stand and proclaim by solid our voices to the millions of ordinary Filipinos who clamor for truth, accountability and reforms," said the statement signed by 282 Assumption alumnae that was a veritable list of who's who in Philippine society.

"We ask the Assumption family to contribute prayer with critical discernment and principled action," the statement said.

Vice President Noli de Castro joined the chorus against EO 464, he did calmly pro-administration Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri, secretary general of the ru

ASSUMPTION, A-10

Great balls of fire! Imeldific lauds 'Bulilit' for having 10

By Arlyn dela Cruz
Correspondent

TAKE IT FROM THE "IMELDIFIC," BY her own admission the epitome of excess: President Macapagal-Arroyo has more balls than any man and is not afraid to use them.

"You have to give it to her. She has the balls," Imeldific Marcos said of the embattled President. And if women has

ORBIT, A-11

BATASAN BOMBING

Court orders arrest of ex-solon, 3 others

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A QUEZON CITY JUDGE WEDNESDAY ordered the arrest of former Bataan Rep. Leroy Jalandoni and three others on multiple murder charges arising from last year's bombing of the Batasang Pambansa complex, which killed six people.

Jalandoni's political rival, Rep. Wahab Akbar, was among those killed in the Nov. 13 blast, which involved the use of a bomb planted on a motorcycle. Six people were wounded in the attack.

Judge Ralph S. Lee of Regional Trial Court Branch 83 issued the arrest warrant in the absence of three other accused charged with multiple murder and multiple frustrated murder.

Besides Jalandoni, the three others ordered arrested were Benjamin Bautista, a cousin of Senate Minderaan party Rep. Mujiv Hataman; PO1 Bayan Jacilo and Hajaron Jaime.

The four were included in the amended informations and they face charges of Pharmacol multiple murder as well. The court set their arraignment on March 14.

BOMBING, A-11

Besides Salapuddin, the amended information said the accused conspired to kill Akbar "by commission of a price." The bombs-rigged motorcycle exploded while parked near the Batasan entrance.

The Inquirer tried to contact Salapuddin but could not reach him through his cell phones. Even before he was charged as a suspect, chiefly after the bomb

COURT, A-11

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Fairly cool and mostly dry weather with isolated rain showers in eastern sections and thunderstorms in central Luzon and Mindanao. Low cloud ceiling and reduced visibility in the mountain areas. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to sunny skies.

Area	Weather	Area	Weather
Baguio	Partly cloudy	Boracay	Partly cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy	Iloilo	Sunny
Tagaytay	Partly cloudy	Dumaguete	Sunny
Metro Manila	Partly cloudy	Cebu	Partly cloudy
Legazpi	Partly cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly cloudy
Puerto Princesa	Sunny	Cagayan de Oro	Partly cloudy
Coron	Partly cloudy	Davao	Partly cloudy

Complete weather forecast on page A18

Second FRONTPAGE

EZ2 SIX DIGIT

11 9 5 2 3 4 4

Announced number

Mid-Day **SUERTRES** Evening

1 0 2 8 9 4

6/42 LUZON/VIS-MIN

1 15 18 31 35 38

P19,391,805.00

ATO out; new agency created

GMA signs law to take civil aviation to 21st century

By Tarra Quismundo, Christine Avendaño and Rita T. Olchondra

IN TWO MONTHS' TIME, THE JOB OF OVERSEEing the country's civil aviation will be taken over by the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), an autonomous body that will replace the obsolete Aviation Transportation Office (ATO) and take Philippine aviation to the 21st century.

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday signed into law the Civil Aviation Authority Act of 2008 creating the CAAP and paving the way for the abolition of the ATO, an agency created by a 1952 decree.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza, who acts as temporary aviation chief, said the ATO will be abolished by May and reorganized into the CAAP.

The DOTC last January appealed to Congress to immediately pass the bill creating the CAAP after the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) downgraded last December the Philippines' aviation safety rating to category 2 from the ideal category 1.

The downgrade reflected the FAA's assessment that the ATO did not meet six of the seven safety criteria of the International Civil Aviation Organization (Icao), the international aviation coalition that lays down the standards for the global aviation industry.

An updated civil aviation law and effective safety regulations were among the minimum requirements that the FAA faced lacking in the country's civil aviation system.

Good chance

At the signing ceremony in Malacañang attended by the legislators responsible for the law's passage yesterday, the President said that with the CAAP, air travel will be a lot safer in the Philippines and the country will become a magnet for more investments and tourists and consequently more jobs for Filipinos.

The President said she was happy that legislators heeded the call she made for the creation of a civil aviation authority to let State of the Nation Address last July.

Mendoza said there was a good chance the country's ratings with the FAA would improve with the new law.

He said the DOTC would invite the FAA by June to conduct another assessment.

With P300 million released by the President, Mendoza said the DOTC has sent inspectors for training in Singapore and the United States.

ATO officials also confirmed yesterday that the Icao will conduct a comprehensive audit of the country's aviation systems, personnel and facilities later this year.

"The FAA audited the operations part, airworthiness inspections... but the Icao will check our compliance. Iisa'y isa'ng ibinigay regulations] in terms of the aerodrome [airport areas], navigation services, runways," said ATO safety division vice chief Jose Sapitan.

The DOTC said the CAAP will be an autonomous body with quasi-legislative and quasi-judicial powers possessing corporate attributes. It will be an attached agency of the DOTC for purposes of policy coordination.

The CAAP will have financial independence as it will no longer turn over its earnings to the national treasury, as the ATO does. It will have the power to promote, and and retain its revenue and income.

More importantly, the CAAP will have the power to hear and decide civil aviation cases.

As the authority will continue to run at least 86 airports around the country, Mendoza said it may have to increase airport charges, including the fees that airlines pay for airport, runway and equipment use, and passenger terminal fees.

WHAT'S INSIDE

NBN PROBE pulls senators' ratings down /A8

LOCAL politics blocking Lakas-Kampi merger /A8

ESPERON says he rejected invitation to a coup /A22

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Noli tells critics: I'm my own man

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Doris Z. Pisudlugan

THE CONSTITUTIONAL SUCcessor to President Macapagal-Arroyo insists he is his own man.

Barring by omission he has failed to definitively state his support for President Arroyo amid calls for her resignation in the wake of corruption allegations, Vice President Noli de Castro said yesterday no one could dictate on him.

"That's their strand. I have my own mind. Nobody can dictate one member to [what I should say]. Mayroon naniginot ko, nagmumukod din ako para sabi ko [I am watching developments just like you]," he said.

De Castro, a broadcast journalist who parlayed his popularity into a Senate seat in 2001 and the vice presidency in 2004, gave an interview before yesterday's Cabinet meeting at Malacañang.

'Fine, thank you'

Before the meeting started, De Castro and President Arroyo chatted briefly.

When asked how his relations with the President were, De Castro said emphatically: "We are fine, thank you."

He said he couldn't believe critics of the President would continue to accuse him of not taking a stand in the current political situation. Former Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman said De Castro had not done enough to convince the nation that he was the next president "of the people."

"Sabi ko lang kasi ang tanong sa akin sam ng ibang grupo eh wala pa akong stand. Mind you mayroon ako. Ano bang hindi ko maipaggagawa ngayon wala pa akong stand eh ang alam ko nung umoh [I was asked about the claim of certain groups that I didn't have a stand. I don't know how they can say I don't have a stand when I have said plenty]," De Castro said.

De Castro has not joined the calls for Ms Arroyo's resignation, but said he supported the Senate investigation into the P889-ZTE telecommunications deal that reportedly ran into big corruption.

He said he was in favor of scrapping Executive Order No. 464 which bars government officials from appearing in congressional investigations without the President's approval and having former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri testify in the Senate on the NBN-ZTE deal in which Ms Arroyo and her husband have been implicated.

Warm relations

In a separate interview, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said De Castro had been enjoying warm relations with Ms Arroyo.

"We has his own mind. He knows what he's doing as vice president — he knows every thing is within the bounds of rules and regulations," Ermita said.

"Definitely, you can see [they're together today]," he said, after De Castro and Ms Arroyo took time to pose for a picture in the Palace with the press assisted well as the backdrop.

In an interview now the week end, De Castro said he was "prepared, not preparing," to take over the presidency in the event Ms Arroyo resigned or was ousted.

"From Day 1, I have my duties under the Constitution as the elected vice president. I'm prepared for that," he said, stressing that with the mandate given him by over 13 million voters in 2004, "the 2004 mandate is hands (There's a difference between) preparing and being prepared."

All for Noli

Officials of the ruling Lakas-CMD earlier told the Inquirer the merger of their party with the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino [Kampi] of Ms Arroyo was for the benefit of De Castro, who would be endorsed by the President as the standard bearer of the administration coalition in the 2010 elections.

That explains why De Castro is sticking with Ms Arroyo through thick and thin, they said.

A member of the Wednesday Club at the Senate expressed confidence in De Castro's ability to lead the country should President Arroyo step down.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said he could vouch for De Castro's competence.

"Admittedly at first there were concerns about Jocjoc's [De Castro's] limitations. After seven years of being a senator and vice president, he's been able to get the confidence," Pangilinan told reporters on Monday.

"But more than the (matter of) confidence, whether we like it or not, we should follow the constitutional succession. Hypothetically he is prepared to take over," Pangilinan said.

Yellow cabs at Naia

A PIECE OF NEW York will soon welcome tourists, businessmen and business travelers in Manila as yellow cabs have joined the fleet of airport transfer in the country's premier hub.

Starting today, taxis in Manhattan yellow will line up to ferry arriving passengers at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) terminals for a new metered service.

The Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) launched the new taxi service at the Nia Centennial Terminal yesterday afternoon as an alternative offering to accredited company taxis that charge at a fixed rate by destination.

"We are proud to have initiated and spearheaded this new service that we are offering to passengers and airport users. Now they have a cheaper but safe mode of transportation," said Mia Concepcion Manager Alfonso Cusi said in a statement. Tarra Quismundo

A CALL FOR TRUTH
FROM CONCERNED ASSUMPTION WOMEN

We, members of the Assumption family, to which the President belongs, join the cry of our people for truth and accountability. We have been taught by our beloved Alma Mater to live the Assumption values of truth, integrity, love of God and country, and fidelity to duty. We are therefore compelled to break our silence.

Disturbing questions beg to be answered in the search for Truth, Accountability and Reform. There seems to be a concerted effort by this Administration to obfuscate, if not subvert the truth by all sorts of methods.

- Why is Mr. Jun Lozada, a simple but credible and courageous witness of the ZTE NBN deal, so threatening to the Government with all its vast powers, as revealed in the riveting Senate Hearings?
- Why the intimidation, abduction and threats to him and his family, not unlike the threats to other concerned citizens who dare speak out views contrary to the government's stance?
- Why the disappearances of witnesses, whistle-blowers and journalists who courageously speak the painful truth?
- Why does the Administration hide behind the skirt of E.O. 464, preventing the Cabinet and high government officials from appearing when summoned by Congress?
- Why are the military and police forces being used to subvert the truth when their mandate is to protect all citizens?

The perceived pattern of massive corruption and abuse of power under the present dispensation remains unresolved and without closure in the following cases:

- The Hello Garci controversy
- The Joc-Joc Bolante fertilizer scam
- The massive overpricing of the Diosdado Macapagal Highway and other infrastructure projects
- The COMELEC Election Machines scam
- The hundreds of unsolved extra-judicial killings of political and media personalities

We demand:

1. Immediate cancellation of E.O.464
2. A halt to military and police activities such as illegal surveillance, wire tapping, cell phone bugging and other forms of intimidation
3. Timely release of pertinent documents and other evidence to the Senate and other appropriate investigating authorities, which will allow a thorough review of all government projects.
4. Immediate accountability of all government officials and parties who have participated, enabled or profited from graft and corruption starting with the ZTE NBN scandal.

We make a stand and proudly add our voices to the millions of ordinary Filipinos who clamor for TRUTH, ACCOUNTABILITY AND REFORM.

We ask the Assumption family to COMBINE PRAYER WITH CRITICAL DISCERNMENT AND PRINCIPLED ACTION.

Int'l think tank puts RP on 'deteriorating' list

By Alexis Pagsa

THE BRUSSELS-BASED INTERnational Crisis Group (ICG), an international think tank focused on crisis analysis, says Mindanao, has included the Philippines on its list of countries with "deteriorating situations" due to the increased presence of government forces in Mindanao.

In their February monthly report, the ICG noted that the number of military and police forces had been increased in the capital due to antigovernment rallies and an alleged plot to kill President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Also in the list are Cameroon, Comoros Islands, Congo, Ethiopia, Israel, Somalia and Serbia.

"Amid claims of assassination plots, President Arroyo upped military and police presence in Manila's east and antigovernment rallies in Manila," the ICG noted.

Last Feb. 11, the Presidential Security Group (PSG) said they received reports of a plot to kill the President. PSG Chief Brigadier General Avelino Razon said a security guard recovered documents from a parking lot in Metro Manila detailing a plot to assassinate Ms Arroyo and to attack foreign embassies. The documents were written in Arabic, according to Razon. Last week, he also reported they have arrested a foreigner involved in the supposed plot.

The PSG and the military also pounced in some 2,000 troops in Metro Manila as a security precaution in anticipation of protest actions during the anniversary of the Edsa I People Power Revolution last month.

The PSG also put 10,000 policemen on alert while the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) National Capital Region Command (NCRCommand) also put its soldiers and armored units on alert.

Various militant and civil society groups launched a series of protest actions culminating in the large interfaith rally to Mendiola City last Friday.

The ICG also noted that the massacre in Maitenbeng, Jolo last Feb. 1 where eight civilians, including two children were killed, constituted to the downswing situation in the country.

The group said violence in Jolo claimed the massacre in Maitenbeng, Jolo was caused by government soldiers.

"Exact details of the operation are unclear. The [Philippine] Army claimed the victims were caught in a crossfire between troops and the Abu Sayyaf. But investigation by a human rights commission report showed the claims and called for criminal charges," the ICG said.

The group said the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue based in Switzerland reported "indiscriminate firing" by soldiers. The Center is involved in conflict resolution projects in the Philippines and other areas around the world.

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) also said the military was responsible for the massacre.

Sumilao farmers still landless after 100 days

STILL LANDLESS AFTER MORE THAN 100 days since they first set out for Manila in October last year, the Sumilao farmers will again march en masse to their land claim.

This time around, however, they will be marching to the sea around Mindanao, in a symbolic reenactment of the Biblical saga of Jericho by the Israelites.

The farmers yesterday received the blessing of Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales to do a "Jericho March" around Mindanao, hoping that the latter's implementation of Arroyo's Dec. 18, 2007 order, which granted the farmers the disputed 144 hectare land in Sumilao, Bukidnon.

Some 144 farmers from Sumilao met with Rosales yesterday in a closed-door meeting at the Manila Archdiocese office in Intramuros.

Lawyer Arlene Bag-ao, the group's legal counsel, told the Inquirer that Rosales had called the group for a meeting before the Jericho March.

"The Cardinal told them his prayers are with them (Sumilao farmers), and that in a one-with-them unjunction he called on reconciliation of the case," said Bag-ao.

Starting today, Bag-ao said, the 144 farmers will march every day from 7 a.m to 6 p.m., until the palace carves out the order and re-installs them in the land. "Their message here is that they cannot wait any longer. They want the case to be finished."

She said the Sumilao farmers would walk the 6 kilometer stretch of streets bordering Mindanao from Cotanron, U.N. Ave., Taft Ave., San Marcelino, all the way to Nagtahan to 12 hours.

In Do Bible, the Israelites, under the direction of Joshua, marched around Jericho once every day for six days. On the seventh day, they marched around the city's walls seven times and gave out a war cry which caused the Jericho walls to collapse and overcame the group to charge into the city.

Bag-ao said the "Jericho March" would be a much harder feat compared to the Israelites farmers' historic 1,700-km walk from Bukidnon to Manila from October to December 2007 which earned them the public's attention.

Msgr. Hilarion Gruta, December 2007 order, which had rechanelled the 144-hectare Bukidnon property from agro-industrial to agricultural land, is now being questioned by its current owners, San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI), in an appeal to the Office of the President.

The Quezon-based foods which sold the land to SMFI in 2004, had also intervened in the case by filing a petition for certiorari at the Supreme Court arguing that their intervention with SMFI when it sold the land had been affected by the reclassification order.

Beverly T. Hatchidan

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The call by certain quarters for President Arroyo's resignation is pointless, divisive and counterproductive.

It is based on mere allegations that have yet to be proven beyond reasonable doubt in the court of law. It will only polarize our people and sidetrack the national focus from our real task, which is to sustain the economic takeoff and bring the fruits of prosperity to the overwhelming majority of our people.

The country's macroeconomic fundamentals have been strengthened by bold reforms enacted by Government over the past seven years. No better proof can be offered than these: 26 quarters of nonstop growth, renewed investor confidence in the economy, and the onset of better lives for our people.

This opportunity to build national prosperity is unprecedented and must not be squandered by letting the rabble rousers take over the national agenda and play out their dark political drama. They are making a mockery of our constitutional processes—and subverting the democratic institutions we have rebuilt and nurtured.

The elite-based groups have failed to build popular support for their call. Enough of them. The clear message from the overpowering majority of our people, most especially those in the countryside, is to reject this overdose of political noise. Instead, they want their leaders to attend fulltime to their urgent concerns, such as creating quality jobs and raising living standards.

Millions of our people spoke through their congressmen, governors, mayors and barangay officials, who called on the President last week. Their message to President Macapagal-Arroyo was this: Stay put!. This is the call of the multitude.

Those who profess to have the national interests at heart should match their rhetoric with these actions:

Wait for the 2010 elections to effect change;

Let due process take its course with regard to their allegations; and,

Work with Government to ensure that the Filipino masses reap the benefits of our country's economic turnaround.

Enough of dark politics! Let's keep the momentum going!

REPRESENTATIVES

Speaker Prospero C. Nograles
Rep. Thomas D. Dumpit, Jr.
Rep. Arthur D. Cabochan
Rep. Leonardo M. Estrella, III
Rep. Rodolfo T. Albano, III
Rep. Junie E. Cua
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Local politics blocking Lakas-Kampi merger

By Norman Bordadora

AMID TALK OF LEADERSHIP REVOLT, THE merger of the two dominant administration parties—Lakas and Kampi—in preparation for the 2010 elections is being bogged down by local political rivalries.

"Merger may take some time because of political problems at the grassroots. Arbitration may be necessary to fix the local problems," Speaker Prospero Nograles told the Inquirer yesterday.

In the 2007 elections, candidates of Lakas (Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats) and Kampi (Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino) ran against each other in many provinces and congressional districts.

The same rivalries continue to haunt the pro-administration coalition, which hopes to strengthen its ranks in time for opposition-backed coming presidential polls.

Opposition parties are also in the process of consolidation, led by popular former president Joseph Estrada.

Nograles said efforts are underway to address these local issues.

"One by one, we will try to solve [the problems] patiently," he said, referring to areas where both Lakas and Kampi stalwarts are ranged against each.

"The groundwork has been laid. We will [use track-local arbitration] as soon as the leadership issue [in Lakas] is settled," Nograles said.

The leadership issue refers to the hardline stance taken by ousted Speaker Jose de Venecia of Pangasinan, who refused to gun the party presidency seeing President Macapagal-Arroyo should be the one to resign amid allegations of corruption in connection with the ZTE-NBN scandal.

Kampi leaders said De Venecia's move was a precondition for the merger.

Mr Arroyo is chief of both Lakas and Kampi. De Venecia was ousted as House speaker after his son implicated President Arroyo's husband in the ZTE-NBN.

Nograles, party source told the Inquirer, is a frontrunner for the Lakas presidency if and when De Venecia leaves the post.

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City Treasurer
Cauayan City

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, March 5, 2008
1th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Is 49:8-15
Gospel: Jn 5:17-30

Jesus said to the Jews: "My Father goes on working and so do I." And the Jews tried all the harder to kill him, for Jesus not only broke the Sabbath observance, but also made himself equal with God, calling him his own father.

Jesus said to them, "Truly, I assure you, the Son cannot do anything by himself, for only what he sees the Father do. And whatever he does, the Son also does. The Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does; and he will show him more genuine things than these, so that you will be amazed.

As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to whom he wills. In fact, the way the Father judges no one, for he has entrusted all judgment to the Son, and he wants all to honor the Son as they honor the Father. Whoever ignores the Son, ignores as well the Father who sent him.

Truly, I say to you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life; and there is no judgment for him because he has passed from death to life.

Truly, truly I say to you, the hour is indeed coming, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and, on hearing it, will live. For the Father has life in himself and he has given to the Son also to have life in himself. And he has empowered him to well to carry out Judgment, for he is a son of man.

Do not be surprised at this: the hour is coming when all those lying in tombs will hear my voice and will come out; those who have done good shall rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

I can do nothing of myself, and I need to hear another. One to judge; unfair; judgment is just, because I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me."

Commentary:

Death is the great unknown. Even the mention of the subject makes many of us uncomfortable. We simply cannot bear to see our own experience what will await us on the other side of this life.

Those who follow Jesus know from Him that we have on four destiny. He is the Lord of life, and death has no power over Him; nor does it have power over those who receive Him.

We do well to remember that this life will pass all too quickly, and that we should live for the inevitable moment of death. With Jesus to our lives, we have no fear.

Quotes: Congregation for Evangelization, Inc., 4 Maginoo St. 1107 Diliman, Quezon City, 1101 Tel. 433-9000 Fax 433-9000 Quezon City, Tel. No. (02) 925-3438, Fax No. (02) 925-3438. E-mail: info@cbcp.org. Website: http://www.thedailygospel.com. Compiled, Published & Sent Daily by: Fr. Jose Alejandro Cruz, SSP. Editorial Staff: Fr. Philip Jerald Labuñes, SSP, Glenn Aurey Sebastian, Ronel Ortiz, Aaron Abel Sarah Angeles. Quezon City. E-mail: thedailygospel@yahoo.com, bgtpost@gmail.com

NBN probe pulls senators' ratings down

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE INVESTIGATION OF THE CONTROversial $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with China may have caused the drop in the performance ratings of 14 senators, a survey showed.

The Pulse Asia survey conducted on Feb. 23-24 covering 1,200 registered voters found that only Joseph Estrada (up 7 percentage points to 61 percent) and Jinggoy Estrada (up 6 percentage points to 66 percent) managed to improve their ratings compared to December last year when the last survey was done.

Francis Escudero and Juan Ponce Enrile (9 large their ratings unchanged at 83 percent and 52 percent, respectively.

The survey had 300 respondents.

Senators Rodolfo Biazon, Gregorio Honasan, Pia Cayetano, Leo Lapid and Ramon Revilla Jr. were not included in the survey for lack of awareness of their performances by the respondents.

'Ulat ng Bayan'

The rest of the senators suffered drops in their ratings: Aiker Arroyo (down 23 percentage points to 32 percent); Senator President Manuel Villar (down 15 points to 56 percent); Blas Ople (down 14 points to 40 percent); Juan Miguel Zubiri (12 points to 25 percent); Edgardo Angara (12 points to 41 percent); Alan Peter Cayetano (6 points to 45 percent); Aquilino Pimentel Jr. (8 points to 54 percent); Miriam Defensor-Santiago (6 points to 43 percent); Panfilo Lacson (5 points to 70 percent); Gringo Aquino III (5 points to 64 percent); Loren Legarda (4 points to 77 percent); Nonato Magkiwat (4 points to 66 percent); Rodolfo Gordon (2 points to 47 percent), and Juan Ponce Enrile (1 point to 1 percent).

Pulse Asia noted in its "Ulat ng Bayan" that the major news events occurring the Senate during the survey period was the corruption-tainted NBN probe in which President Macapagal-Arroyo and her husband had been implicated.

"For those who deserve low ratings, they only have themselves to blame. For those who deserved better scores, matter of perception or lack of depth or both," Pimentel said.

Administration senators said the low ratings reflected the public's aversion to the NBN probe since both administration and opposition senators were affected.

But Estrada said the survey was ordered to individuals and not to numerous like the Senate.

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Neri to resume testimony at the Senate

From page A1

closed doors after the eight-hour hearing where justices earlier said Neri could not invoke the privilege to refuse to testify.

Court spokesperson Jose Midas Marquez said the consensus was that Neri could not be arrested, and his case before the high tribunal would be deemed suspended.

Neri and the Senate are to submit within 24 hours a manifestation allowing Neri to appear at the Senate to continue his testimony.

Marquez said the three questions Neri refused to answer earlier would be deemed asked and executive privilege invoked, so that the questioning on the other matters could continue, if Neri also invokes executive privilege on other questions, then he could be cited for contempt but he would not be arrested and the queries would be submitted to the court for resolution.

3 questions

The three questions were: Whether Mr. Neri approved the project in spite of the bribery disclosure, whether she had dictated on Neri to approve the project and whether she had ordered her husband to influence Neri into ZTE Corp.

The suspicions' questions during the oral arguments appeared to focus on the justification for Neri to continue his testimony and detail his conversations with President Macapagal-Arroyo after he learned of her alleged offer of bribe him with P200 million to get the Senate to endorse the $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) project with China ZTE Corp.

Executive resistance

Neri could also avoid answering other questions which he thought would infringe on executive privilege and all those questions would then be gathered and again submitted to the Supreme Court, which would decide if they fell under privileged communication.

Questions said that he did not want the premise of the Senate to conduct legislative inquiries diminished. "There is already this resistance on the part of the executive department officials to appear in the Senate's hearings either by invoking legislative or other reasons," he said.

He said that under normal circumstances, the Senate may reject an invocation of executive privilege and order the official's detention until he responded to the questions.

During the marathon hearing, the justices said that there was no showing that Neri's testimony would either compromise diplomatic relations with China or reveal military secrets about the national operations on the NBN-ZTE project that the Arroyo administration wrapped following allegations of bribery that implicated her husband.

Executive privilege is a constitutionally-recognized right of the President to withhold information from the courts and the public any information regarded as vital to the national interest. The material could include conversations and correspondence between the President and her aides, as well as national security matters.

But Santiago pointed out that Neri and Mike Arroyo only discussed the scandal, not the bribery.

He said the alleged bribery money was given to several Chinese officials, which was why leaving Neri to disclose his conversations with the President could affect foreign relations.

"What's the problem there, even if it runs through executives of the [officials']?" asked Justice Conchita Carpio Morales.

'It will embarrass us'

Bautista replied that statements might endanger diplomatic relations and shame the country.

"Supposing there is bribery involving officials of China, it will embarrass us," he said.

Carpio pointed out that if indeed there was bribery involved, then the payoff money would be shouldered by Filipino taxpayers since the project would be funded by a loan.

He then asked how the general could not find the Philippine government money in the banks, that would be a form of a "diplomatic tourism."

Bautista said there would be a "chilling effect" because of the fear that the conversations would be unwantonedly related to third party. But Puno said the claim of chilling effect was a confusion, and the lawyers would have to explain in particular impact on Mr. Arroyo.

Puno and Carpio were thorough each of the three questions the Senate was interested in.

Undue interest

Puno said the first question whether the President followed up on the NBN project, if answered in the affirmative, would only show that she had an interest in the project, but not necessarily "undue" interest as Bautista argued.

Bautista said that if his client answered the question, it would affect the President negatively because of the prevailing "scenario" atmosphere.

Carpio also wondered whether there was anything unlawful or legally wrong" if Mr. Arroyo followed up the project with the Neris.

Lesaspas said there was nothing wrong. But when asked why Neri was afraid to testify, Lesaspas replied: "I cannot fathom" Neri's reasons.

On the question whether Neri was ordered to penalize the NBN deal, Bautista said that if Neri answered this, the country would be subjected to criticism from other governments interested in the deal and from the public and Congress.

'Should heaven fall'

"But the project benefits the people ... If she orders the privity, should heaven fall on the Presidential Palace?" he replied.

Carpio also said Neri could have answered that it was not the Neris which prioritized contracts.

On the question whether the President told Neri to approve the NBN deal with China after being told of the alleged bribe, Carpio said first could have answered that he was not the approving party.

Bautista said that if the question was answered with a yes, it would show that the President had undue interest in the project, but Puno said that the answer was just the lawyer's personal opinion.

INTERESTED? INDEED. Senators Rodolfo Biazon, Manuel Villar, Francis Pangilinan, Alan Peter Cayetano and Mar Roxas attend the oral arguments on Neri's petition to stop the Senate from issuing a contempt citation in the NBN-ZTE project. Biazon, Cayetano and Roxas chair the three committees jointly investigating the scandal smeared deal. MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

Assumption classmates clamor for GMA to dump EO 464

From page A1

ing Lukan-Christian Muslim Democrats.

'Let's get rid of it'

"If EO 464 is a problem in the search for truth, let's get rid of it," said De Castro. "I believe that the truth will prevail and the truth must come out." (See story on Page A3.)

"Since its issuance, EO 464 has gotten the ire of the people," said Aubrey, this first administration senator to come out against the order.

"The President, as a sign of goodwill and to show that she is an icon in cleansing our corruption at all levels, should revoke EO 464 as soon as possible," the senator added.

The question is: Will Malacañang finally pacify us by the controversial presidential directive?

Last week, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, tackled pressure to table a motion to withdraw the Arroyo session allowing widespread indignation over attempts to cover up Mahalacahay's involvement to the scandal. $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) project. Many quarters have been asking EO 464 and allow her officials to reveal what they know about the controversy.

Malacañang a day later announced that the CBCP recommendation would be studied by a committee. It is up to the members of the President's chief legal counsel, Sergio Apostol, informed the legal team was deep in the study of the ramifications of revoking EO 464.

But yesterday when asked for an update, Apostol said he would not recommend what he was being badgered by reporters about the EO.

"There's no need to EO 464," said Sergio Apostol on the day the cleanse to dump the Executive Assistant and while the Supreme Court itself was conducting a hearing on executive privilege...keeping information regarded as sensitive from public scrutiny.

Already decided

"The issue has been already decided by the SC," Apostol said.

The Supreme Court ruled in April 2006 that the provision in EO 464 prohibiting the appearance of officials of the Office of the Arroyo's permission in legislative hearings to aid of legislation was unconstitutional.

Ms Arroyo issued EO 464 in 2005 to counter what she described as a "politics of insult" after National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales was cited in contempt and ordered detained for refusing to answer questions on a government contract with a "Chinese telecom lobby firm during a Senate hearing.

Apostol's pronouncements virtually confirmed rumors that Malacañang had no other recourse but to scrap EO 464 altogether.

But Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said in a separate interview that Ms Arroyo could not act on the CBCP request until after a meeting with bishops slated this week. Ermita said the President "is kept abreast of the situation."

Ermita said the bishops should know that Ms Arroyo has always shown awareness about preventing Cabinet members from appearing before the Senate.

Separation of powers

"The very title, I recall, is meaning that the principle of separation of powers is observed and ensuring that the rights of those invited to such hearings are respected. All of that will be explained to the bishops," Ermita said.

He refused to say if the legal team was leaning toward recommending the formal revocation of EO 464.

"I cannot tell you where it's heading to. Where's got to be a unanimous decision," he said in order of our dialogue with the bishops for the satisfaction of all concerned," Ermita added.

Playing safe

In a radio interview, De Castro said the suspension to reports that he was always playing it safe on important issues affecting the country such as the NBN scandal.

De Castro said the perception of his being "timid" and "innocent person" to ensure the presidency in the event of a vacancy was influenced mostly by the political leanings of the one making

Great balls of fire! Imeldific lauds 'Bulilit' for having 10

From page A1

ron balls. "Bulilit (roughly, 'little one') probably has 10 balls! I have no doubt in my mind that she will finish her term," Mamora said.

She referred to the strongman Ferdinand Marcos spoke to a small group of journalists, mostly newspaper columnists, at her posh condo in Makati City on the evening of Feb. 25.

Her muddled naming fit As 1986—recently at a private party, and described her as "refined and in control."

She said she had offered the President anecdotal advice—as he would, to talk at length about the "international Broadband Network (NBN) project, and to not allow whistle-blower Rodolfo Lozada Jr. to hog the airwaves.

"Dahil ito ay kanya," he must expound in the media, Mamora explained. "mapa-interview siya, hindi lang si Lozada nang si Lozada, for every one has his or her own truth, and truth is perception dipong inilimak ayos, maiintindi siya ng perception."

Grandiosa

Taking off on the current talk of grandiosity about Imeldific claims of million-dollar kickbacks in the NBN deal with China's ZTE Corp., Marcos described herself as "probably the greatest patriot of all, for I want to have it all."

She said confessions from the former first lady against other First Family members have been budgeted by reporters about the EO.

"There's no need to EO 464," said

Hooked on 'garbage'

Marcos continued that like many other Filipinos, she was hooked on the Senate inquiry into the NBN-ZTE controversy and had taken to watching the hours-long live telecast of the hearings.

But she described the proceedings and the testimonies as "icing cake" and "all garbage."

"Wow ano ito ba ang the truth when all you hear is what is being said in the hearings?" she said. Isn't it true that we Filipinos are a penal case?" Marcos said.

She lamented that despite the "beauty" and "handsomeness" of the Filipino, "we don't hear that anymore, and instead our mouth garbage on TV."

"Ayt to stop talking about the ugly truth," she said, adding that what should be discussed was the Filipino's "beautiful spirit."

And while she may not be a fan of Lozada's, Marcos conceded that the man had guts.

Still, "he might be telling the truth, but not the kind of truth that I want to hear," she said, declaring that she did not relish a "expose nasty story."

She also demanded to know why Lozada was condemning the alleged corruption in the NBN-ZTE deal when "he was part of it."

'Mother' of the people

But Marcos did not call the meeting expressly to talk about Lozada and his guts or "frailty" and her faults.

She also wanted to announce that she was ready to run again for the role of "mother" of the Filipino people on the so-called "Marcos Foundation for Truth, Justice and Peace."

She said the foundation's main goal was to emphasize her husband's last will "to give all his earthly riches to the Filipino people."

Declared Marcos: "The Filipino poor is my party. Give me two years, I'will straighten this promise. Im to do that, not in the media. have to help me tell the truth about the Marcos wealth. The Marcoses are not thieves. That is what should be known."

She deplored in her guests hours of discussion that she described as just "a potpun of the proofs" that the Marcoses "did not steal from the Filipino people."

Tons of gold

"In one account alone, we have 15,000 tons of gold," Marcos said.

She said she was ready to vindicate everything in the country to talk about her "No Filipino gold" legacy.

But did Marcos, who turns 80 in July, still have the energy for it?

She said she may not tired despite all the talking she had done, and required only two hours of sleep to find "the energy and the spirit that I need in for a student to the nation again."

It was not the first time Marcos presented to share the family wealth with the Filipino people. But this time, she was talking the media—who, she said, had made her notorious and "frailtiffic"—to help her "correct all that is written about the Marcos wealth."

"The media can kill you because the guns and bullets. The media are the most powerful instruments. I hope the media will take a new look at the Marcos truth and help me tell the world about it," she said.

Timing

Asked why she was speaking now when she had not been in the news lately, Marcos had a ready answer: Timing. Timing is the advantage of the timing. Everyone wants to know the truth.

"Now let us talk about the truth—the truth that will solve the country's problems in poverty. It's very simple. Let the Marcos truth prevail and no Filipino will be poor in two years."

Government Should Serve the Truth.

We are former senior government officials who have served the government in the administrations of Presidents Marcos, Aquino, Ramos, Estrada and Arroyo. Today we see how the institutions of government are being manipulated, weakened, and corrupted. We are committed to help rebuild and strengthen the government institutions in which we worked to serve the public good rather than personal and partisan interests.

Our people can only trust a government that governs with truth. We grant government so much power over our lives, resources and shared future because it governs with truth. When there are serious doubts about government's adherence to truth in matters of vital public interest, no real peace or substantive unity is possible until such doubts are resolved. We cannot move on without the truth.

We are now in the midst of great disturbance because we doubt the truth behind the NBN-ZTE deal. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo had belatedly cancelled the contract because of reported "anomalies". Hence, most Filipinos reasonably conclude that corruption tainted this deal. For several months now at the hearings of the Senate investigation, we have all seen disturbing glimpses of the truth about alleged corruption that attended the NBN-ZTE deal. We are outraged by what we have seen thus far.

The President said recently: "Ang taumbayan galit sa kattwalian. Ganoon din ako, galit din ako sa kattwalian." We affirm the first sentence. We ask that the second sentence be demonstrated in action. Having belatedly cancelled the contract to show her supposed anger with reported corruption in this deal, the President must now follow through with actions to determine the actual "anomalies" and establish responsibility for these. Otherwise, canceling the contract could be interpreted as an effort to cover up corruption rather than to pin it down and root it out.

Government should serve the truth and the President should act immediately and decisively to enable the truth to emerge.

The most credible forum thus far to establish the truth behind the NBN-ZTE controversy is the Senate investigation that has persevered in seeking facts and witnesses. The Senate is a functioning democratic institution that can help the people recognize the truth about this divisive matter. We thus call on the President to cooperate fully with the Senate and stop denigrating it so that its investigation can be completed as soon as possible. In particular, we ask the President to lead in showing government's commitment to the truth by taking the following actions which can reasonably be done within one week:

- First, order acting CHED Chair Romulo Neri to resume his testimony before the Senate investigation without any restrictions or limitations;
- Second, order the release and delivery to the Senate of all public records pertaining to the NBN-ZTE deal, starting with the minutes of the NEDA Board meetings on the project;
- Third, suspend DOTC Secretary Leandro Mendoza and Assistant Secretary Lorenzo Formoso, as the DOTC was the lead agency for this project;
- Fourth, suspend DENR Secretary Lito Atienza, PNP Director General Avelino Razon, Deputy Executive Secretary Manuel Gaite, Deputy NAIA Chief Angel Aruta, Senior Supt. Paul Mascarinas and all those involved in the attempt to prevent Senate witness Jun Lozada from testifying; and
- Fifth, order a halt on any further attempts by such agencies as the DOJ, DENR, NBI and BIR to harass Senate witness Jun Lozada and those who are testifying in behalf of the truth.

The Filipino people can make democratic institutions work to fight corruption by even the most powerful people in our midst. We can do this based on the power of reason and the power of the people's communal action. We deserve a government that governs with truth.

The President must demonstrate her commitment to the truth through these actions within one week as more and more of our people make their judgment. She must do these or be condemned as complicit with, and in fact, as being at the center of, the lies surrounding the NBN-ZTE deal.

The President must do these or the people will make their judgment and act on the basis of their conviction.

1. **Florencio Abad**
Former Secretary, Department of Education
2. **Tomas Africa**, *Former Administrator, National Railways Office*
3. **Roberto Ancajas**, *Former Usec, Department of Agriculture*
4. **Simon Bacani**, *Former Secretary, Department of Agriculture*
5. **Angelito Banayo**
Former Secretary, Political Affairs
6. **Romeo Bernardo**, *Former Usec, Department of Finance*
7. **Emilia Boncodin**, *Former Secretary, Department of Budget and Management*
8. **Gerardo Bulseco**, *Former Usec, Department of Agrarian Reform*
9. **Clifford Burkley**, *Former Usec, Dept. of Social Welfare and Development*
10. **Socrates Campilla Jr.**
Former Usec, Department of Tourism
11. **Jaqueline Cruz**, *Former Usec, Department of Education*
12. **Jose Cuenca II**, *Former Governor, Central Bank of the Philippines*
13. **Col. Guillermo Eleazar**, *Ret. Former General Manager, Manila International Airport Authority*
14. **Karina Constantino David**
Former Chair, Civil Service Commission
15. **Teresita Quintos Deles**, *Former Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process*
16. **Edgardo Del Fonso**, *Former Head, Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Mgt.*
17. **Benjamin Diokno**, *Former Secretary, Department of Budget and Management*
18. **Quintin Doromal Sr**
Former Commissioner, PCSO
19. **Franklin Drilon**
Former Executive Secretary
20. **Narciso Escaler**
Former Ambassador to the United Nations
21. **Evangelina Escobedo**, *Former Commissioner, Securities Commission*
22. **Jesus Estanislao**
Former Secretary, Department of Finance
23. **Victorio Garchitorena**, *Former Head Presidential Management Staff*
24. **Jose Luis Gascon**, *Former Usec, Department of Education*
25. **Marietta Gaw**, *Former Chair, Presidential Commission to Fight Poverty*
26. **Jose Antonio Gonzalez**
Former Secretary, Department of Tourism
27. **Michelida Guerrero**
Former Usec, Department of Finance
28. **Cielito Habito**
Former Director-General, NEDA
29. **Edilberto de Jesus Jr.**
Former Secretary, Department of Education
30. **Lina Laigo**, *Former Secretary, GSIS*
31. **Ernest Leung**
Former Secretary, Department of Finance
32. **Josefina Lichauco**, *Former Secretary, Dept. of Transportation and Communications*
33. **Narcisa Lim**, *Former Secretary, Department of Tourism*
34. **Jose Miguel Luz**, *Former Usec, Department of Education*
35. **Jose Molano Jr.**, *Former Executive Director, Commission on Filipino Overseas*
36. **Vitaliano Nañagas**, *Former Chair, Development Bank of the Philippines*
37. **Conrado Navarro**, *Former Usec, Department of Agrarian Reform*
38. **Imelda Nicolas**, *Former Lead Convener, National Anti-Poverty Commission*
39. **Pete Peña**, *Former Secretary, Department of Transportation and Communications*
40. **Vicente Paterno**
Former Minister, Ministry of Trade
41. **Cesar Purisima**, *Former Secretary, Department of Finance*
42. **Victor Ramos**, *Former Secretary, DENR*
43. **Amina Rasul**, *Former Presidential Adviser and Concurrent Chair, National Youth Commission*
44. **Rodolfo Reyes**, *Former Vice Secretary*
45. **Wolfredo Reyes**, *Former Usec, Department of Tourism*
46. **Alberto Romualdez Jr.**
Former Secretary, Department of Health
47. **Albert del Rosario**, *Former Ambassador to the United States of America*
48. **Francisco del Rosario**, *Former Chair, Development Bank of the Philippines*
49. **Ramon del Rosario**, *Former Secretary, Department of Finance*
50. **Melito Salazar**, *Former Member of the Monetary Board, BSP*
51. **Antonio Salvador**, *Former Chief, Office of the Pres. Adviser on the Peace Process*
52. **Leticia Ramos Shahani**, *Former Usec, Department of Foreign Affairs*
53. **Cesar Sunico**, *Former Secretary, DOTC*
54. **Jose Tamesis**, *Former Secretary, Department of Trade and Industry*
55. **Corazon Juliano Soliman**, *Former Secretary, DSWD*
56. **Dinky Soliman**, *Former Usec, Department of Agrarian Reform*
57. **Mario Taguiwalo**
Former Usec, Department of Health
58. **Jaime Galvez Tan**
Former Secretary, Department of Health
59. **Ricardo Tan**, *Former Head, Philippine Deposit Insurance Commission*
60. **Wigberto Tanada**
Former Commissioner, Bureau of Customs
61. **V. Bruce Tolentino**, *Former Usec, Department of Agriculture*
62. **Veronica Villavicencio**, *Former Lead Convener, National Anti-Poverty Comm.*
63. **Desiderio Virtus**, *Former President, Land Bank of the Philippines*

Ex-officials list 5 things GMA must do, or else

From page A1

Trade Minister Vicente Perreras at a briefing yesterday at the Interior Club Filipinas in Greenhills, San Juan.

The PAGG, composed of former Cabinet officials in the Marcos, Aquino, Ramos, Estrada and Arroyo administrations, said the Senate inquiry into the corrupted National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with China's ZTE Corp. remained the "most credible forum" to establish the truth in the scandal marked by allegations of bribery and cronyism.

"We thus call on the President to cooperate fully with the Senate as soon as possible. In patriotism, we ask [her] to lead in the quest to uncover the truth, come to the truth," it said in a statement titled "Government Should Serve the Truth."

The PAGG recommended that Ms Arroyo:

- Order former National Economic and Development Authority Director General Romulo Neri to testify in the controversy so he can "without any restrictions or limitations."
- Order the release and delivery to the Senate of all public records pertaining to the NBN-ZTE deal, chiefly the minutes of the Neda board meetings on the project.
- Suspend Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza and assistant Secretary Lorenzo Formoso III.

"They should be placed under preventive suspension so that they could not impede their subordinates from telling the truth," said Tiu Laksi, a former senator.

- Suspend Environment Secretary Lito Atienza, Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon, Deputy Executive Secretary Manuel Gaite, assistant airport general manager Angel Avalos, Supt. Raul Mascariñas and all officials who had allegedly tried to muzzle whistleblowers Rodolfo Lozada Jr.
- Stop any attempt by government agencies to harass Lozada and other witnesses.

More than 50 members

The PAGG said its membership now numbered "more than 50."

It had earlier called on incumbent Cabinet officials disillusioned with the administration to "cut chose."

Some of its members had joined rallies calling for Ms Arroyo's resignation, including the massive weekend rally to Makati City on Feb. 20.

Among the new member organizations and their former posts were Agriculture Undersecretary Rafaelito Garaldo, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, retired Lt. Gen. Gudberto Cruzman, general manager of the Manila International Airport. Eduardo del Rosario, head of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management; Improvement Commission Executive Rodolfo Pena Bonoan, Tourism Secretary Wilfredo Reyes, Health Secretary Alberto Bernardito Jr., Undersecretary Antonio Salvador, Ricardo Tan, head of the Philippine Deposit Insurance Commission, and Agriculture Undersecretary V Bruce Tolentino.

Political will

Emilio David, who retired as chair of the Civil Service Commission in February, said one week was a "reasonable time" for Ms Arroyo to act on the PAGG recommendations that she described as "nothing extraordinary."

"If there's a political will to seek the truth, all can be done within one week," David said at the briefing.

She said that if all else failed, the group would be forced to call for the President's resignation.

'What they want'

In Malacañang, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita brushed aside the PAGG statement.

"We cannot just react to them," Ermita said shortly before the start of the weekly Cabinet meeting presided over by Ms Arroyo.

"We all know what they want. They just want to weaken the government, but we don't have to [follow] what they want us to do," he said, adding that the President's critics could protest now and then as long as they did not violate the law.

Ermita denied reports that an Army brigade was being recruited to join a plot to unseat Ms Arroyo.

The National Reserve Officers' Training Corps Alumni Association Inc. also issued a statement of support for Ms Arroyo.

It said the Arroyo administration could and to enjoy the "full support of the majority" of the people.

Lorelei Fajardo, the President's deputy spokesperson, rebuked the former Cabinet members for calling for the suspension of officials linked to the NBN-ZTE deal.

"We appeal to the seniors to be more circumspect [in] their call," Fajardo said in a text message.

She added: "Like them, we assume that all acts of the government in question were done with presumption of regularity. Complaints have been filed and investigations are being conducted. So let's give them the chance to defend themselves, and if there should be any findings, the appropriate action can be considered by the President."

Shrugged off call

At Camp Crame, Razon said there was "no basis" for the call for his suspension.

"I wish there were, so we can resort to [it]," he said.

WORRIED FOND? Senior officials from the administration holding a press conference at Club Filipino in Greenhills in San Juan include seniors of advocates Bro. Eli San, Leticia Shahani who's calling to, from left, Karina David, former Civil Service Commission chair, Eleg Dolor of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), and Imelda Nicolas, NAPC lead convener

Last month, fellow alumni at the Philippine Military Academy called on Razon to resign to "preserve his integrity" amid charges that police rescued kidnapped Lozada.

But Razon shrugged off the call, and declared that Lozada was kidnapped to silence him.

Razon flew to Hong Kong yesterday to attend a conference of the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol).

PNP Deputy Director General Jesus Verzosa is in command until Razon returns on Saturday.

Miracles

Asked if the PAGG expected the President to listen this time, David said: "Miracles always do happen."

She said that if the ultimatum was ignored, the PAGG would meet again to draw up a new set of recommendations.

"What you will expect from us would be, of course, statements to follow this, because its depth analysis of double things that any reasons and crisis administration can be expected to do," she said.

Told that Michaelmas had merely scoffed at the PAGG statement, David said: "If you're sleepless, you should listen to the people. It's simultaneous the kind of number to expect a statement without carefully studying it."

Ignoring the "character office" of help will only "heighten the situation," she said.

Victoria Enachescua, former head of the Presidential Management Staff, indicated that the group wanted to engage the government constructively on good governance, among other aims.

"And we hope to work with other sectors, business and civil society, so we can help the bureaucracy itself strengthen all the democratic institutions of government," Enachescua said.

The PAGG is forming clusters on the economy, social development, rural development, political reform and accountability to make a critique on laws, policies and regulations, and draw up ways to improve them.

Protest rallies

But apart from drawing up fresh reform recommendations, the former Cabinet members would continue to join protest rallies demanding truth, accountability and reforms.

"If no effort is taken by the government to clarify these things, various groups will begin to take their own action, and some of those in directions we don't want," former Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus said, when asked if the PAGG was warning Ms Arroyo of people power if she failed to heed its call.

De Jesus said it was "up to the government to preempt any action that will lead to a greater problem, by using its power and resources in ferreting out the truth."

To act under pressure

Perreras did not discount the PAGG's possible support of street protest. "We really feel that [the President is] not going to act unless there's pressure. The government must know that the people want the truth, and they're not getting it," he said.

Teresita Ceriles, Ms Arroyo's former adviser on the peace process, said there was "no contradiction" between the PAGG's moves to join protest rallies and to draw up reform recommendations. With reports from Michael Lim Ubay and Alexis Pajas

Some Cabinet officials planning to jump ship

By TJ Burgonio

SOME OFFICIALS OF THE CABINET as well as those of lower rank are "disturbed" by the corruption scandal rocking the Arroyo administration, and are considering making a disembark, two former Cabinet officials said yesterday.

These incumbent officials are purportedly "torn" between staying and leaving the Cabinet even as they encourage their "many books" with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"Let's just say there are a few] who are disturbed by what's happening and who are asking themselves whether their resignations can allow them to remain," former Civil Service Commissioner Chair Karina David told the Inquirer.

But she declined to name those now purportedly grappling with the dilemma.

Deodorizers

"Even before this controversy[, there were some who thought they were being used as deodorizers and thought of quitting. That was heightened by [the testimony of] Jun Lozada," David said.

In a phone interview hours before the flew back to Cambodia for work, former Trade Secretary Cesarios "Dinky" Sohio said "old Cabinet Jewel" officials meant "instinct" to sort out people about their plans to quit.

Soliman, who was one of the officials who quit the Arroyo Cabinet in 2005 at the height of the "Hello Garci" election fraud scandal, declined to name names.

But she said: "I wouldn't be surprised if the good people ... are feeling the pressure of this call to leave from a government that I lost so overall ing."

Asked why incumbent Cabinet officials had not responded to calls to break away from the administration, they were disillusioned with it, David said: "Well, we. Things will come."

At a briefing in Club Filipinas, David and Soliman's scuffle in "unity walks" to Malacañang.

QC court orders ...

From page A1

ing, the former lawmaker had denied involvement.

Not guilty plea

One of the accused named in the original information, Ilyan Gadiano, is said to be a former driver of Imelda[illegible].

Bolante and codefendants Cedric Antolin and Adham Kimatin, who were brought to court by inmates wielding policemen, were arraigned over the opposition of their lawyers.

Bolante pleaded not guilty. Antolin and Kimatin refused to enter pleas, prompting the court to enter a not guilty plea for them.

The others killed in the bombing were Akbar's mother Asiatri Hasanali, Marcial Tabilo, a driver of Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza, Eduardo Rep. Liza Maza, Eduardo Ermita, Mario Lim Buenaloso and Vicente Garcia, three staffers of Bayan Occidental Rep. Pedro Henry Teves, who was himself wounded in the blast.

'This is the Philippines'

Before the arraignment, Lee ordered the police escorts to remove the defendants' handcuffs.

"We are in the Philippines," Lee said.

At a court clerk read out the charges, Antolin, wearing the orange shirt of a detainee, gripped the bar in front of the bench in front of him, while Kimatin stayed with the bar cuffs dangling from his arms.

Inclusive of action from his counsel, usually listening to the proceedings while surrounded by [illegible] men. Some police officers previously said he could become state witness.

Hold-departure order

Defense lawyers Jose Veterans Arguelles requested that the arraignment be deferred, saying he had yet to appeal the Department of Justice's decision unwinding the information.

But the judge ordered the arraignment to proceed, citing a Supreme Court decision to the effect that the inclusion of additional accused in a case was only a matter of form and would not affect the substantial rights of the other defendants.

The judge also directed the state prosecutors to put in writing his request for a hold-departure order against Arguelles and the five others named in the amended information.

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Obama says thank you to Obama

OBAMA, JAPAN...OBAMA HAS IT'S really thanked Obama.

The fishing town of Obama in central Japan recently won world-wide fame for its fervent support for US presidential candidate Barack Obama.

The town's citizens have made headbands, T-shirts and even bean cakes decorated with his portrait. The town's mayor even sent gifts.

Now, on the eve of crucial primaries in Texas and Ohio, the mayor of Obama the town is all smiles after hearing from Obama the man.

Mayor Toshio Motabami said Tuesday he had received a letter from Obama in response to a letter, DVD and lacquerware chopsticks he sent the candidate more than a year ago.

"I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the city of Obama for your support and encouragement and thank you for your thoughtful gift," the Democratic front runner wrote in a letter mailed from Washington arriving a Feb. 25 postmark.

"We share more than a common name," Obama wrote. "We share a common planet and common responsibility. I look forward to a future marked by the continued friendship of our two great nations and shared commitment to a better, freer world."

Sadakazu Tanbosashi, a city hall official, said the address on the letter was the same as the mayor's gift had been sent to, and that the Obama letter bore a handwritten signature. AP

Clinton racing to wind back doomsday clock

Barack Obama's stunning late streak of 11 straight nominating victories.

Obama basked in Tuesday's voting as a chance to knock the wind out of the press dismissal senator. Clinton saw the contests as an opportunity to keep her candidacy alive.

On the Republican side, John McCain could clinch his party's nomination with a strong showing in the primaries in Ohio, Texas, Vermont and Rhode Island.

Defeat in Ohio and Texas would leave Clinton facing the humiliating prospect of ejection from the race, and dash her hopes of a Clinton restoration—all at the hands of a man she sees as short of presidential metal.

The Clinton campaign has been reeled in a strange limbo for days.

'Saturday Night Live'

In a bid to lift the mood last weekend, Clinton doubted her press pack and several by flew to New York to guest star on fabled "Saturday Night Live."

But even that appearance seemed laced with melancholy.

Clinton was asked by her television interlocutor how her campaign was going. "Very, very well," she said sweetly, but then snapped the punch line: "Why, what have you heard?"

No stranger to dire political battles, Clinton even betrayed a rare hint of letting fate take its course.

"I intend to do as well as I can on Tuesday, we will see what happens after that," she told reporters on her campaign plane.

Her comments were stripped of elation on her friends.

3 hours' sleep

But just hours later, the hard charging, never say die Clinton of yore was back, saying she was just "warming up."

On a mere three hours sleep, the former first lady showed up at a Chrysler Jeep car plant, dispensing donuts and coffee to workers from her cozy blue-collar support base before they disinterred.

Next, she harnessed through an early morning press conference, rebuking the media for their supposed crush on Obama and raising the bar by saying the only measure of success in Tuesday's contests was victory.

While all had seemed dark the day before, with Obama edging ahead in polls in Texas and eroding her lead in Ohio, several fortuitous events gave Clinton's team the opening it had been aching for days.

Hopes rise

First, reports said an Obama chief economic adviser had met a Canadian consular official who said the Illinois senator's remarks on a key North American free trade pact were more election rhetoric.

The Obama campaign quarrelled with the interpretation of the Canadian official.

But the saga boosted hopes in the Clinton camp she could woo any wavering voters to economically hewth Ohio, where the phrase "free trade" is an expletive.

There was more embarrassment for Obama.

Kickbacks issue

Obama's longtime friend and fundraiser Antoin "Tony" Rezko went on trial on charges of bribing public officials, and urging political contracts to demand kickbacks (Read: business).

While Obama is not accused of any wrongdoing, it was another chance for Clinton aides to hammer his squeaky clean image.

Both Obama and Clinton expressed confidence in their chances, but both teams acknowledged that split decisions and close wins could prolong the battle by at least another month...or more.

Delegates count

Obama leads in the Associated Press delegate count, 1,286-1,276. His margin is greater among delegates chosen in the primaries and caucuses, 1,187-1,035, while Clinton leads among party officials, known as superdelegates, 241-199.

Obama has been gaining ground among superdelegates in recent weeks as his victories have piled up, and Clinton's support has begun to erode.

A total of 2,025 delegates is needed to secure the Democratic nomination.

Clinton needs to win by sizable margins in Ohio and Texas to cut into Obama's lead as the delegate count because they are awarded proportionally.

Republican race

And even if Clinton wins the popular vote in Texas, she could wind up with fewer delegates than Obama because of the state's unique same-day primary and caucus system.

Polls show tight races in both Texas and Ohio. Clinton is ahead in Rhode Island, but Obama leads in Vermont. A total of 278 delegates are at stake in the four contests.

Republican contenders McCain, a former Vietnam prisoner of war, and former Arkansas foe Mike Huckabee also campaigned in Texas.

McCain has 1,014 delegates—271 short of the 1,191 needed for the nomination at the party's national convention in early September in St. Paul, Minnesota. Huckabee is far behind with 237 delegates. Reports from AFP and AP

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INQUIRER

OPINION

Clean up the barracks

LAST FRIDAY, PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S official day began with a mass oath taking of local officials. It was supposed to end with a fiesta, sponsored by one of her sons. But newly-confirmed generals who were also supposed to take their oath were a no-show. Reporters noticed, and surely the President did, too. We can only surmise that this added to her developing sense of unease on that day, which culminated in her abandoning the loyalty fiesta organized by her son in favor of planning herself in Camp Crame during the Mahal rally.

EDITORIAL

The choice of Camp Crame serves as a reminder that in the mind of the President, her ultimate bulwark of support is the Philippine National Police. And yet it is the Armed Forces of the Philippines that has been representing itself, without any subtlety, as the ultimate arbiter of the balance of power in our country. When AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon engineered his own AFP-PNP "unity walk," he did so to send the message to both civilians and soldiers alike that the top brass are united, and they will move as one. Which, however, doesn't necessarily mean they will move, when the time comes, unquestioningly in the President's defense.

This brings us to the ultimate fear of the Armed Forces. It is as simple as this: they don't want to reach the point where soldiers end up shooting each other. This fear surpasses the military and police's traditional concern over the dilemma of whether or not to fire on the public in a people power situation.

We say this because if the officer corps has even considered a people power situation, they are doing so purely from the point of view of pure military involvement, that is, as some sort of "tipping point" that will make or break an administration's hold on power. At present, the AFP and PNP have devoted their energies to thwarting protest actions, as well as to keeping order within the military and police in the hands of the generals. This has only served to increase their influence, for whatever purpose they see best to use it (restraining concessions and perks from the administration, or holding political groups they mistrust in the opposition). In forcing everyone—administration and opposition alike—to up the political ante, they are increasing their influence to determine the course of events.

There are many things the military and police can do, that keep them out of the sphere of partisan politics, but unconditional or their obligations to be not just good soldiers but good citizens, too. Several long-overdue reforms have failed to receive administration support.

The first is the need for the National Defense Act, Commonwealth Act No. 1, to be brought up-to-date. The second is to revisit and update the Articles of War, which also dates back to the Commonwealth, to take into consideration the developments, since then, of the concept of command responsibility. This includes the manner in which military justice has recently been increasingly perverted for partisan purposes.

The third is to further strengthen professionalism by adopting a fixed term for the AFP chief of staff and the commandant of the Philippine Military Academy. The fourth is to find ways to eliminate the political pressure, often verging on outright extortion, placed by politicians on officers whose promotions are brought before the Commission on Appointments. And the fifth involves the eradication of corruption within the officer corps.

Esperon is playing praetorian guard, who can uphold or depose emperors. There is much he can do, if he intends to retire in May, to pursue reform and accountability in the AFP that he isn't doing them.

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GMA getting ready to impose martial law?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

MORE BAD NEWS IN HER DESPERATION TO hang on to power, President Macapagal-Arroyo may declare martial law! A little bird, claiming inside information, told me this, adding that to bolster its claim it must let reveal his identity. We can only wait a few weeks. It is gratuitous of us to end hearing.

My source said he noticed the information media public to promote the government so that it would not go through with a declaration of martial law. On the other hand, it can be a deliberate ploy to scare the people into demanding Gloria resignation. If they don't resign, she may declare martial law, with all that that has in store for the population. The leaders of all the opposition groups, including journalists critical of the administration, call be arrested and held without bail. Journalist what I mean is this columnist has blocked that "friends" of journalists mistakenly working for the administration are spreading false information in the guise of tips and information. And if there are no arrests made soon enough, it is hoped they will slow down instead of going full speed ahead with efforts to force Cha's ouster.

However, opposition groups are not standing by waiting for martial law to be declared by the executive but are busy behind during the interim martial law years that we can remember it as a section. And that it is not to arrest every bit leader who are involved. On the contrary, therefore become a ruler is being appointed or elected to public office. Many former dictators who have no talents at all and would not have attained any promotion otherwise under opposition to the government by President Corazon Aquino. They have run for elective positions, still capitalizing on their stay in detention camps. Being a former detainee became a badge of honor.

So you see, an indiscreet imposition of martial law will not scare many, they may even welcome it. Who knows, it may be their stepping stone to Congress or the Cabinet.

On the other hand, GMA may really be planning it. She can never call aside her. There are those who think that, unlike in the days of Marcos when it was easy to declare martial law under the provisions of the old Constitution, it is much more difficult under the Cory Constitution which requires the concurrence of Congress within days after its declaration. They are saying, therefore, that GMA controls the House of Representatives, the Senate is another half of Congress. Therefore, it would not be that difficult to get the kind of Congress vote if the House is predominantly opposition.

So, assuming GMA declares martial law, have a number of opposition leaders and critics detained, imposes curfew and curtails not only freedom, what then? Wouldn't that make Philippine surgery? So angry that another people power may be a reality this time? There may even be some crazies who, taking a cue from the suicide bombers in Iraq and Israel, may make a try on the life of GMA and her family. It also worries that now in distancing? If GMA imposes martial law, we may just hold the fort by the tail and the current for go without risk of being sworn.

On the other hand, there is an easier, safer, more honorable way. She can resign with honor and dignity and be appointed as "ambassador" like President Richard Nixon during Watergate. Many was fully rehabilitated not long after and he was regarded as an elder statesman whose opinions on affairs of state was sought by succeeding administrations. After all, GMA is already the second longest-serving president, after Marcos. What more does she want? Being president for ten years is not a bad of mess for her! She would have to resign and have some peace and quiet at last.

Instead of sending her off with hatred as an usher dictator, Filipinos will see her off with affection if she steps down voluntarily. Resignation is not a hateful or dishonorable act. Many others have done it with their honor intact. What is dishonorable is to cling to your post even when the people clearly do not want you there anymore. GMA shouldn't need to suffer illness. Friends or family members who say otherwise because they would be out of jobs and influence when she is no longer in power. They are not thinking of her, they are thinking of themselves.

Madame President, think about it.

Maneuvers are going on right now along mindanao. Troops are being maneuvered mercilessly as roads are widened. That a huge parking right now along Commonwealth and Quezon Avenues in Quezon City and along Macleber Highway in Bataan.

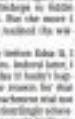
Do Commonwealth, the sad sight of scarcen trees on the University of the Philippines campus with their roots cut off. Several pink ribbons and around their trunks like Imelda's women grave memories. Those trees are going to be measured. On Quezon Avenue, the sidewalks are bare trees more than a meter wide because the trees are gone. In Bataan, 628 centuries-old trees are being systematically cut with chainsaws. A number of them have already fallen. Environment Secretary Lito Atienza should save them.

Why this haste to cut down trees when what we need are more trees and more and more Filipinos are now environment conscious? Because even more money and the contractors who are widening the streets have been given the privilege to use the trees and sell them. The contractors make a show of hailing the trees purposedly for transplantation to appease environmentalists. They do complain some of the trees when they cut the best to the public, as on the UP campus, but the greater number disappear.

Secretary Atienza, please save the trees. Please.

Power

THERE'S THE RUB



Conrado de Quiros

LAST WEDNESDAY I ATTENDED AN INTEResting gathering at Conspiracy the Café in Quezon City, a place that quite inadvertently some has a reputation on top of its door saying, "No conspiring against the public, cyclone Elsa, or hot corpse Cabinet." The event was the launching of a campaign called "Datin na."

"Datin ka" is the brainchild of several singers/artists belonging to a group called "Datche" which has been trying to get the youth to register and vote. They have a website on their account, whatever names fine, through artSpecifically through singing and drawing paintings, the two things Filipinos excel at. "Datin ka" comes also to a higher level as a song "of great significance" in the country: "We are not exempted from the responsibility of contributing to positive change."

The highlight of the event was the singing by some of the session's best known singers/artists of the song, "Bayan Muna Wag Kang Matakot," written by Hotel Cabaretto, which they hope will become the youth's anthem. The song is a catchy one, with strong lyrics and a stronger melody, and should have no problem achieving its goal. Its message is simple. You can be a hero. You can achieve great deeds by doing simple things, like spending your week, which in this country now takes on the aspect of supreme heroism.

Seemingly a small thing in the vast scheme of things (when "Datche Ka" was launched last Wednesday the media was agog about the rally on Friday), it is in fact a huge thing in our history-starved view of things. I mentioned sometimes something Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, the CBCP head, said some weeks ago, which was that he himself was plugging for "a new kind of people power," one that would depend less on authority figures, such as bishops and politicians, gods and generals, and more on ordinary folk to show the way. Ordinary folk doing ordinary things that out of the sweet blends arise extraordinary results. Ordinary folk doing individual things that by synchronicity are united into a solid wave of change. Just a small one, also, with its issues barely resolved.

Ironically, what we know as people power, which we've had a couple of times, has never really had the people in it. Or the people were there only in the beginning, in the outpouring of a moment, but not in the end, in the building of a new world. I can understand why many Filipinos have become wary or disillusioned, about people power because it's been applied in the teaching of one set of leaders for another. It's been used to bring to power people even more tin the unelected, a moral dwarf designating, damning, and sustaining the very thing that brought her to power. If that's the kind of people power we'll have again, then I'd say run off to the hills.

Some of this is in my we shouldn't have bold and visionary leaders anymore. All of this is in my we can't, and shouldn't, rely on them alone. The strength of democracy is not in leaders, the strength of democracy is in people. The title of the program, people power down into real with the coming of a power, it begins with it. That is the point to hang on, anchored on, the next time we invoke people power, which will probably be soon. That is the only guarantee that our next's not up like the last one.

We do need to maintain the "communal action" but that's to not just in filling the streets and for time that's five in three another dream away. That's also in demanding from the new government an accounting of itself to us, the people. Not from the old one, the one we overthrew last November from being ignored and tolerated. We can, and should, be thanks but just in asking life and liberty from the castle and the phalanx of councilors scrambling over her to extinguish the candles and light the torches. Instead of helplessness and cynicism at everyday life. I've said it before and I say it again: Thanks thing for us to do for freedom, harder thing for us to do for it.

We are the people, we are when cause for people power. It's time we stopped saying, "Ang mamayan nga dahil sa ito" and started saying, "Ang tadhana nasa atin sa ito."

Cold statistics and warm bodies

ANALYSIS

Armando Doronila

THE THRUST OF WARM BODIES AT THE PNOY-pit power rally last Feb. 25 lugged behind inertia of support for calls for the resignation of President Macapagal Arroyo over the P329-billion fertilizer fund scandal and irregularities committed in recent public opinion poll surveys.

In its latest survey conducted from Feb. 27 to 28, on the eve of the 22nd anniversary of the 1986 People Power Revolution, Pulse Asia found that 60 percent of respondents in Metro Manila would support protest actions calling for the resignation of government officials. However, one of the 60 percent who supported demonstrations, only 16 percent said they would join the rallies, while 44 percent said they would not. Asked why they would not join the rallies, 16 percent said they had "more important things to do," another 16 percent said there would be no change in government, 21 percent said they needed to earn a living, 7 percent said they were being watched, and 4 percent said they were "tired" of people power.

The turnout in last Friday's rally underscores the need for caution in relying on expressions of support for political movements. It shows that there is a long way to go before numbers, reported in opinion polls, translate into mass mobilization.

The survey also showed that 61 percent of Metro Manila residents believed there was a "big possibility" that the presidency of Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, who is known as the former investigator in the 1896 case against Jose Rizal, will be used to railroad criminal charges. There is also the danger of miscalculation that Gonzalez' testimony alone would topple the regime, although the same survey found that 62 percent of Metro Manila residents considered him a "credible" witness at the Senate inquiry. He could be a key witness in the case, but the prosecution hasn't acted as to whether most of his testimony are based on hearsay and whether that can be a firm anchor upon which to build a new people power movement. Public opinion is swimming in flux.

The survey helps explain why the large turnout captured by organizers of the Feb. 25 rallies both in Makati City did not materialize. Crowd estimates ranged from 35,000 to 80,000. Police estimates tended to underrate the crowds, and anti-government's media groups tended to exaggerate the figures. The latest emphasized that the rally was the largest street protest action against the government since the Senate started investigating the controlled 2004 contract with Chavit's ZTE Corp. more than five months ago. Such claim is unreliable. Protest groups interpret the 80,000 turnout as a sign that the call for the President's resignation is gaining momentum.

The survey finding leads to the question: why is there a big gap between the 60 percent who would support the call for Mrs. Arroyo's resignation and the 21 percent who want's sake to the streets. What will it take for unwilling to decide to take the big step of unconstitutional path the street protest? Many of Gonzalez's testimony, or more direct revelations from other witnesses? Or Supreme Court's ruling on Mrs. Arroyo's immunity from criminal suits while being charged in the Senate inquiry? Or the latest Sandiganbayan decision that Gonzalez' testimony alone would topple the regime, although the same survey found that 62 percent of Metro Manila residents considered him a "credible" witness at the Senate inquiry. He could be a key witness in the case, but the prosecution hasn't acted as to whether most of his testimony are based on hearsay and whether that can be a firm anchor upon which to build a new people power movement. Public opinion is swimming in flux.

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Pension for seniors

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

SOME 8 MILLION SOME SENIOR AGE, a couple (dependent about the joys of being retired from work and living on a pension. That is, they said, they would simply resell from their condominium to the nearby Greenbelt complex and with the money they received buy a house or a condo in the province. This is because senior citizens are blissfully are exempt in many cases from the "petty" senior citizens enjoy around the country such as discounts on medicines and restaurant meals.

"Sarah from the big house," added the wife, "we each get a birthday cake on our birthdays!" Of course, she added, the cake is no great shakes, being a generic commercial product. But with the "P" in the "P" in the "P" in

More than a legal question

I DISAGREE MUCH MORE FROM Fr. Joaquin Bernas' column on President Macapagal-Arroyo's immunity from suit. ("Shielding the President," Inquirer, 2/11/08) Surely our dilemma comes from the conflict generated by a credible person who has great to so much reason to question the integrity of the highest official of the land, and that of the administration she heads.

I have nothing about the Constitution, but one would believe that the Constitution destroys its authority from the nation's collective acceptance of this document as the primary instrument by which we are to be governed. By extension, the President's actions depends ultimately on that same acceptance.

Isn't there something to be said of the notion that our public officials are custodians of the offices they occupy, and that they should not only be doing the right thing, but "be seen to be doing the right thing"? The legitimacy of high office comes not from the legal edifice erected to it, but from the nation's confidence and trust in the institution.

Coming back to Father Bernas' column, I had expected him to educate us around those values that support and form the foundation of our institutions rather than on the legal issues which, a student of law could have covered just as competently.

Most of us can readily see that there are smart lawyers who will readily get Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo out of this mess.

If we accept Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada as a credible person, then the issue is fundamentally how the highest official of the land has violated our Constitution. GMA has a sacred duty to uphold the institutions of the nation, by bringing them into so much disrepute, by abetting the pursuit of the truth, by misusing the instruments of State for personal ends, GMA is destroying those institutions. She is leading the nation into anarchy and lawlessness, back into our feudal past where might (in the guise of divine right) was right.

I thought that Father Bernas, as a priest, would have been more aware than most Filipinos of the necessity to correct perceived God's truth, and man's. His column addressed the present crisis as a legal issue; I thought that he would see the crisis in more than just that.

—LEV MENDOZA,
jose.mendoza@gmail.com

LETTERS

A newspaper's courageous stand

I READ THE INQUIRER ALMOST daily. Even when I was living abroad, I read it via the Internet. I would like to thank and commend the Inquirer and its editorial staff for their courage to stand for truth, which is manifested in the quality of the newspaper's news accuracy and editorials.

Carry on the good work, Sirs!

—ESEQUIEL LAÑA,
esequielLaña@yahoo.com

Jpepa far worse than NBN deal

WHILE THE ZTE-NBN DEAL IS reaching the ominous, an even more damaging shocker is speeding past public notice towards implementation. The Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (Jpepa) is on its way to ratification unless more senators give it closer scrutiny.

Just like the ZTE-NBN deal, the Jpepa was negotiated in secrecy and signed abroad, away from the glare of Philippine media. It can hardly be filled in soon because a copy of the contract was released to the public.

But worse, the Jpepa is a sum: provisions: "mega-crimes" with far more disastrous impacts on our country's sovereignty and health, economy, environment and social well-being. The NBN only involves loss of taxpayers' money in corruption; the Jpepa involves the loss of our sovereignty as a people, and of our food and water security—the very sources of our people's survival and livelihood. What was paid for this act of high treason?

During the Senate hearings, the senators learned that Jpepa was pushed for incompetence in wording up with an unacceptable and indefensible bilateral agreement. (Sensible) the Jpepa then have been rejected outright or extinguished, instead of getting a "fatal self" called "side agreement"? If challenged before an international court, could this side agreement stand against an intact main agreement signed by two heads of state and ratified by the legislatures of both countries?

Moreover, it is under Philippine jurisdiction on part of Philippine law and would have the effect of overriding previous contrary legislation. Besides, the side agreement does not correct all the serious problems spawned by the one-sided agreement. The Japanese placed many reservations on compliance to the Jpepa, to protect their interests—which our panel miserably failed to do for ours.

For example, the Japanese could fish in our waters while we could not fish in theirs. Their fishing technology is superior. In short, could, with their superior equipment, catch much more fish than our fishermen could, and they could process and pack their catch on site, ready for international export—even to compete with our fish products in our local markets. Because of the economy of scale, their products would be cheaper. So who would buy Philippine products?

Article 90 bans the Philippines from imposing restrictions on imports and from levying a given level of Filipino investment in Japan—prohibitions not found in Japan's EPAs with other countries. So why are we being bonded into following these countries by ratifying our misgivings EPA with Japan? The Philippines is remarkably cited as a biodiversity superstar, richer in natural resources than those other countries, instead of investing in people development to enable our people to protect, nurture and wisely use our precious resources for the social and sustainable economic development of our country, who is the leadership selling our superior living Bayan as a presence?

—ESTER VALDEZ DE TAGLE,
founding chair,
Concerned Citizens against Pollution (Cocap),
estherattorney@yahoo.com

UP professors a different breed

FOR THE PAST MONTH OR SO, I have been reading a lot of complaints about incompetent and corrupt college professors. Those who feel they still regard traffic tickets to students are the worst bunch. For hopeful students, it is to defense-losing to find out that college, supposedly the "working part" of great ideas, is after all permeated with shoddy disguised as academics.

I finished college in 2002 at the University of the Philippines Baguio and I can honestly say that I never experienced that kind of crass behavior from what happening in that school. The two words that one UP educators live by—honor and excellence—explain how they treat their profession. One of my professors in political science was so adamant on excellence that he always encouraged us to pursue write-ups, typed or printed out on recycled papers. Another teacher was so mindful despite his meager salary, he always brought fresh-cut of the—newspaper for our visits 7:30 a.m. class. These genuine acts of selflessness and more I witnessed in my university.

Year 2008 is most significant to everybody's who, in one way or another, become connected to the unique UP system, because it is its centennial year. Even 2008 to give a great year to expose topgrade talent for the UP educators who have sacrificed much of their time, effort and knowledge and who have never stopped pursuing their noble mission to share the finest knowledge among young Filipino students.

—CHRIS P. UGOM-BAÑOS,
EEE Board,
Calamba, Pangasinan

Money contests in schools

I HAVE READ A NUMBER OF LETters sent by business readers who have expressed utter disgust with what they called "necessary, deplorable", teachers and at the anomalies allegedly committed in the practice of the teaching profession at the expense of students and their parents and relatives.

In some elementary schools, it is a practice, to hold fund-raising campaigns through some sort of a contest where students (boys and girls) are assigned candidates. Classes from Grades 1 to 6 would have a number of candidates (the more the better) who would, then be given "votes in" envelopes" which are distributed to relatives and friends who are asked to vote by paying money inside. The envelopes containing money would then be returned to the students, who in turn would surrender them to the teachers. The money counted would then be counted to determine the candidates' votes. That would be the "first counting." After which, the candidates are given more envelopes for distribution, and the process would be repeated several times more, until the "final counting" when the candidates with the highest "votes" are declared winners.

I myself have been a victim of this annually when I was a teacher in my hometown of San Nicolas in Batangas several years ago, which I was given a number of envelopes by the parents of different candidates who learned I was a raising "ballplayer." They even warned me that no amount would be too big for my effort. I was then working abroad and they thought that I had lots of money. I was forced to give a few bills, for the sake of "politeness," although in my mind I strongly discouraged the practice.

I am sure, we have how much money were actually collected and where it went. There was no tangible improvement in the school or any of its facilities for which, the students claimed, the money collected from the contest would be spent.

It was not even a beauty contest or any competition of merit. It was an anomalous practice designed purely to collect funds for unknown purposes. It was blackmail—solicited by parents of a student-candidate and their parents, pure and simple. It was "money contest," as the people around aptly called it.

I don't know if the officials of the Department of Education—at the national or regional levels, including the district supervisors—are aware of such a practice. They should stop this anomaly.

—RAMON MATEO A.,
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Mike A answers 4 graft charges in ZTE deal

From page A1

nal's ZTE Corp.

"(They're) fabricated and (all hearsay)," Arroyo said when asked by reporters about the charges after the two-hour public hearing. The panel set the next hearing on March 25.

Blue suit

Wearing a dark blue suit, the President's husband showed no emotion throughout the proceedings as his lawyer, Ilya Bautista, made clarifications on the complaints filed against him.

It was Arroyo's first time to attend a hearing in relation to the NBN-ZTE deal. Last October, the Senate invited him to appear in its probe but he asked to be excused for health reasons.

Doctors had advised Arroyo to avoid stress following his triple-bond bypass operation in April last year.

He also failed to appear on Feb. 16 when the Office of the Ombudsman's investigative panel opened the public hearing on the controversy.

But in his counter-affidavit, which he submitted in the panel yesterday, he was ready to testify. He cited De Venecia, indicating that the latter must be the one charged instead of him for trying to "circumvent the government" into awarding the NBN project to his firm.

Arroyo countered Abaya's claim, however, only in relation to the complaint filed by former Vice President Teofisto Guingona and lawyer Harry Roque, among others.

He has yet to file counter-affidavits to the other complaints for various reasons.

'Irretrievable' 10 days

In open court, Roque pointed out that giving the respondents more time to reply beyond the "irretrievable" 10-day period upon receipt of complaints was a clear violation of the Ombudsman's rules.

He noted that the copies Abaya had been furnished copies of their complaints during the first public hearing, which was 15 days ago.

But Assistant Ombudsman for the Military Emilio Gonzalez III, who heads the panel, said the body was giving the respondents more time "in the highest interest of justice."

In an interview with reporters, Roque said the panel appeared to be delaying the proceedings "in clear bias that will be a ground for a motion which will make the people decide whether they should pay attention to the proceedings here or it is just a mere show."

Guingona complaint

In the Guingona complaint, Arroyo was being held accountable for violating the anti-graft law for allegedly assuring De Venecia and Abaya, both of his office's subordinate, the NBN project and for intervening directly or indirectly in a business contract with the government.

Arroyo said there was "no circumvented" residence given as the instant that the witness expressly attempted to confer with communications officials about the project and even admitted during the inquiry that he had lobbied for his firm's proposal with Commissioner Rosevary Leandro Mendoza.

In defense of wife

In dispelling the accusations against him, Arroyo also defended his wife, who is being prosecuted by various civil, business and religious groups to resign for her alleged knowledge of the corrupt deal, by pointing out that the "red loan" for the project gave China the prerogative of choosing ZTE as the contractor.

"If I, or anyone else for that matter, wanted to influence the choice of ZTE as the contractor, I would in turn have to influence the President of (China) to make that choice," he said.

Arroyo continued: "Surely, no one would suggest that Hu Jintao (of) President (Hu Jintao himself) is so equally absurd to say ZTE officers to bribe any Philippine official ... If ZTE had to corrupt anyone at all, it would be the officials of (China)."

Ignorance

For this, Arroyo said his accusers displayed a "degree of ignorance" for linking him to the allegedly overpriced deal.

He accused them of "gross misapprehension of the facts and of the law" and of drawing a "predicate" by referring to "unreliable" newspaper reports to support their claims.

Bautista urged the panel in spirit-court to draw its attention to cases annexed to the Guingona complaint including De Venecia's statements in the Senate, one of which had inspiration imprinted notes than mentioned Arroyo.

A left hand imprinted note on the cereals page of the affidavit said "request note," apparently referring to the President's husband.

"I am reserving my right to file charges for perjury or subordination of perjury (against) those who made these imprinted notes," Bautista said, adding that the handwritten notes appeared to have been an "afterthought" and were "concerted to tailor" the allegations of De Venecia and the complainants.

Velvet glove treatment

The complainants accused the panel of giving Arroyo and Abaya the "velvet glove treatment" for bending its rules to accommodate their counter-affidavits.

Abhayan Rep. Neri Hon. Colmenares and the panel behind the respondents by giving them more time to file their counter-affidavits.

The panel gave Abaya, who was represented by his lawyer Gabriel Villareal, five more days to file his counter-affidavit in the respective complaints lodged against him.

Arroyo was also given five days to answer the complaint filed by lawyer Ernesto Francisco Jr., who earlier asked the panel to suspend the hearing until the Senate had concluded its own investigation.

The panel announced yesterday that it was denying Francisco's motion.

Bautista informed the court that he did not file Arroyo's reply to the charges of Francisco due to the latter's motion, which might only be a waste of time if the court had granted it.

"There is no sense in moving for a motion on a counter-affidavit that will just sit in the file if the proceedings were suspended," Bautista told the panel.

Arroyo's answer to the complaint of 12sec party-list Rep. Jurel Villanueva has yet to be finalized pending the completion of the latter's affidavit.

Summon GMA

Roque also lowered the panel's request for him to put in writing his motion for requesting the panel to summon President Arroyo, being the lead respondent in their complaint, to the hearings.

"It should have been noticed by now since I made that manifestation last (Feb. 19)," Roque said.

Madriaga wife: What life is like on the run with 7 kids

From page A1

But it's true, his wife Eileen said. The promised P200,000 monthly salary never materialized, she said, adding that the biggest sum her husband got was P35,000, hardly enough to feed their seven children aged 3 to 15.

Advice from Reterianes

It must have been her constant nagging about their household finances that drove her husband to seek advice from Rose Reterianes on the ZTE issue instead of discussing it with her, Eileen said.

But who could blame her, she added. The past few years, they've had to sell their car, her jewelry and some household items, and transfer their children from Montessori to the more affordable Malate Catholic School to make ends meet.

The night her husband testified in the Senate, Eileen said she was ready to sell the grocery to buy diapers for the children.

Lights out

When Sr. Atty Cadilla, URR, and Gen fetched her and the kids from their Bandungan home, they came upon a dark-ened house. She had turned off the lights on the advice of neighbors concerned about their security, Eileen said. They had fled with just the clothes on their backs. "I was so rattled and eager to get away I barely packed. I just looked up the house."

Like refugees

Indeed, the children looked like refugees in their worn-out shoes and shorts, their quiet demeanor unusual for kids their age. Have they been traumatized, one asked. "No, they're really good kids," their mother said.

"Even where things get difficult, they don't complain. The eldest even offered me his savings, a little something to add to the grocery money. They are anything I serve them—adobo? Sure no rice, sinigang on bread ..."

If only people knew what they're undergoing, they want to be kind to her husband, Eileen said.

"Why would he risk his family if he's not telling the truth?"

Former Gen. Blue Alvredo Ka-Savage is a former presidential chief of staff Mike Defensor who, she said, had served her husband of being a paid agent.

"He said, 'Madriaga, magkano? Bawi mo?' And my husband said, why it is painful-ing when I only were-formed that he was in the meeting of the Greedy group. I did not say he was involved."

In his Senate testimony, Madriaga, who claimed to be a former Manila-based commissioner to China's ZTE Corp. for the broadband project, said Pres-dent Macapagal-Arroyo and her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, were the core of the "Greedy Group plus plus" that received $92 million in kickbacks from the (Chinese company).

He said the kickbacks demanded by the group partly increased the cost of the National Broadband Network (NBN) project from $130 million to $329 million.

Several senators, however, raised doubts about Madriaga's credibility, noting the reports of him peddling his testimony first to the Malacañang and then to the opposition for P6 million to P10 million.

In a phone interview with the Inquirer, Madriaga denied this. "If I wanted to sell my story to Malacañang and the opposition, then I won't come out like I'm doing now," he said.

Even before Isabelle Had Lozada Jr. came out with his damning revelations, Madriaga said he had been feeding information on the ZTE deal to a number of assemblymen, in part, "For me not kill him, in case person that I never asked for anything in exchange for the information," he said.

Journal

He has been writing about his experiences as a ZTE consultant in his Internet journal since January. Madriaga said, but the Lozada testimony and the death threats he has been getting prompted him to come forward.

But unlike Lozada who spoke hesitantly and tearfully on-screen, unlike Madriaga's relaxed countenance during his testimony as proof that he had exhausted his options.

Again, he denied this. "When I'm under pressure, I tend to talk fast. I don't want to give myself time to think about the consequences. That's for de-fense corroborator," Madriaga said.

And while his testimony has put him and his family at risk, Madriaga said he was born on revealing everything he knows on the allegedly corrupted broadband project.

"The truth will come out, and it will take a big load off my chest," he said. "That's all I want and I don't care if people believe me or not."

Highly paid consultant

Living in reduced circumstances has been a far cry from the years her husband was a highly paid consultant he says, just to the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) during the Estrada administration.

"On the average, he earned P200,000 a month plus commissions in the kilopoise in the strategic project," Eileen recalled.

At that time, they had three cars, a big house with a mortgage (now foreclosed), Eileen said, monthly household expenses of P75,000, a yearly Lenten pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the Union, a Singapore trip once, and a wedding band ring in Glamgate after a dozen pa-ssettled the sea breeze-challenge (it's been now repair his teeth).

Brilliant student

Madriaga, the son of a GSIS lawyer and his textbook-writer wife, was a brilliant student, Eileen recalled. He graduated from high school at 13, was the topnotcher in the Upcat exams, and obtained a mechanical engineering degree from the pra-tigious Texas A & M University in 1969.

(Upon return to the University of the Philippines College Administration Tess.)

She met Madriaga in 1986, Eileen said, when she was working as a secretary in the banking company Manre Mu-chinery. She bore was Madriaga's fraternity brother in Tau Gamma. There was no initial attraction between them, she said, but he began courting her in 1992. The couple got married twice—in civil rites on Sept 29, 1993, and in church rites on May 18, 1994.

Second wife

Eileen, who's turning 48, is his second wife; Madriaga admitted.

His first wife, a Filipina whom he married in 1969, has remained in the United States, he said. They have two children who are also in the United States—an engineer and aged 36, and a daughter, 34, who is a head of personnel. He lived in the US for 25 years, Madriaga said, from 1967 to 1992.

American citizen, big family

Her husband had become an American citizen, Eileen said, though they haven't applied for American citizenship for their children.

He had always wanted a big family, Eileen said of her husband. "Once he kidded me: Can you bear a dozen children? I think he likes a lot of friendly rachna," she said in Filipino.

That's probably why Madriaga would bring along family members from his clubs whenever they went on outings, Eileen said. "We didn't want anybody to be left behind."

As for her, Eileen said, the decades six children were enough. "I had complications with the seventh baby and had to stop working. That's why I had several decades about my seventh pregnancy. Fortunately, I went through with it. It turned out to be a girl. Finally, we had a girl!"

Easy-going father

Madriaga was easy-going as a father, Eileen said. "He'd tell his kids, enjoy your studies, just don't fail. Being smart isn't everything, he would say. You have to be street smart. You must know how to mingle and get along."

That was was put as a reverse test when President Joseph Estrada was convicted in 2001 and his acquittal sent.

"Of course, he was so cynical, me with (my)," Eileen said.

Like other political opponents, Madriaga was drafted into political brigades created by agitator Heribio Maronilo, who had accused the Arroyos couple of trying to take over Philippine Communications Clearing-house for private gain.

Mike Arroyo's promise

The President's husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, had promised Madriaga a job to exchange for his testimony against Maronilo, Eileen said. By that time, Madriaga had left the United States and was well settled with his family as her husband's testimony couldn't harm him by then, Eileen said. Likewise, he, like Lex San Miguel, is godfather to one of their kids.

But Arroyo's promised job never came, she added. He could no longer be reached, Eileen said.

Even the promised consultancy fees for the ZTE deal never came through, she added. "He had an office for him there and they'd give it to him piecemeal—P50,000. Once the contract was signed, they said they'd give him the entire amount they owed him. Nothing came. Once the money was released, he'd get the money. They kept telling my husband. And then suddenly, they just disappeared. And he never got paid."

Anxiety about security

On top of unpaid bills, Eileen now has to contend with anxiety about her husband's personal security. "He has no one to rely on(mine). What if anything happened to him? My God, I'm not even working. What will happen to us?" And then I learned he had high blood pressure during the fire, are hearing ...," she said, teary-eyed.

With seven children to rear, providing the family with a safe home has proved to be a logistical nightmare as well. Recalled Eileen: "When my husband testified at the Senate, friends and relatives started texting us, 'are you safe?' 'where are the kids?' We moved where my children study were hesitate them from going out the gates, worried that they could get waylaid."

But the children slipped out and took a jeepney home, she said.

ZTE-sponsored uniforms

While ZTE got back her husband's laptop with all the pertinent ZTE information in 2006, "where the contract was almost to be signed," Eileen said she could not help but feel the husband was in on the ZTE deal despite denials from its many players.

"One was from a security player and their uniforms were sponsored by ZTE. The uniforms were basic business suits. Is there a reason why the security agency authorities for a school if they didn't know the person asking them that favor? And I also have a cousin's son that ZTE gave as Christmas giveaways. Do you think we'd have those if we weren't linked with them?"

While her husband's testimony had put them at risk, said Eileen, he has also reassured her, "Don't worry. If anything happened to me, you'll be all right. I have friends in the US, whom I have talked to. You'll be safe."

But Madriaga himself does not sound so confident. Asked how far he'll go to pursue the truth, he said: "I'm here for the long run. While we sleep underfoot, I have no one other place to go."

Asked if he misses his family for the truth? He hesitates. "I'll cross the bridge when I get there. But I hope they don't sleep that long."

PERSONAL APPEARANCE First Gentleman Mike Arroyo sits quietly as one side during the hearing on the Office of the Ombudsman on Tuesday and tells his lawyer Ilya Bautista (right) do all the talking. He does not show any emotion through the 2-hour proceeding. EPA/EDDIE

MADRIAGA'S TEXT MESSAGE TO WIFE ELEEN on Sept. 26 already showed his mind was in a mess over the problem that he wanted to disclose. Eileen says but not to which she had not been responsible.

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

GMA asked: Destroy all smuggled cars

By Jaime R. Balanban
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—LOCAL CAR dealers yesterday asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to destroy all smuggled vehicles that were seized at the port here, instead of selling these through auction.

In a meeting on Sunday afternoon, the Cebu Auto Dealers Association (Cada) decided to come up with a manifesto addressed to the President since Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales had said his office could not order the destruction of the vehicles. Several officials from different car dealers joined the Cada meeting.

Morales, in a visit to Cebu on Thursday, said the Customs and Tariff Code of the Philippines did not have a provision allowing the destruction of seized smuggled luxury cars.

Cada president Jose Manuel Gaerlan said that destroying the smuggled luxury vehicles, which navigate well if those sold by the local dealers, would be more effective in putting a stop to smuggling than selling them through public auction.

Gaerlan said there was no assurance that the public auction would be done with transparency and that the seized cars would not end up in the hands of smugglers.

"Then the public auctions before but what happened? They always dealers failed bidding. How public is the bidding that we can't really say because we were never invited. The announcement was not publicly made. He could have helped a lot in the bidding process because we have contacts with dealerships," he said.

In Central Mindanao alone, the government lost over P5 billion in revenues in 2006 and 2007 due to the smuggling of heated new cars and used motor vehicles, Gaerlan said.

The government collects a loss

A LAMBORGHINI is paraded at Malacañang Palace grounds in this file photo after its seizure, along with other hot cars, in Makati City by the Presidential Anti-Smuggling Group.

of P150,000 in taxes for every heated new vehicle, he said.

"If there were around 10,000 cars concentrated in the taxes in 2006 and in 2007 also, the government lost P1.6 billion for the past two years or P5.6 billion a year," Gaerlan said.

He noted that the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc. (Campi) found no significant change in the difference in the number of cars sold by legitimate dealers in the region overthose registered by the Land Transportation Office in 2006 and 2007.

Campi found that the legitimate car dealers sold 1,000 cars in the region in 2006 and 3,936 in 2007 or against more than 20,000 cars registered by LTO in those years.

Lowell Sulermine, sales manager of Hyundai Motors in Cebu, said his company would shoulder the cost of the destruction of the seized motor vehicles to assist the government's antismuggling efforts.

Sebastian said the car dealers were confident that the President would heed their call because she had ordered the destruction of several luxury vehicles at the Subic Free Port last year.

Sulermine and Pamintuan also wrote on Monday a separate letter to Customs Cebu district collector Ricardo Sebastian asking that that it be allowed to import the first brand new Hyundai Grand Starex and Sta. Fe models seized last week and recently smuggled through Cebu.

He said that Hyundai Cebu would like to get the vehicle identification numbers so they could help follow the paper trail back to their mother unit in South Korea.

War on STL, 'jueteng' heightened in N. Ecija

SAN JOSE CITY—THE BISHOP of the Diocese of San Jose has intensified his campaign against small town lottery (STL) and "jueteng" by writing letters to local officials, urging them not to allow these number games to flash again.

Bishop Mylo Hubert Vergara sent letters to mayors and vice mayors in his diocese, reiterating the position of the Catholic Church against jueteng and STL.

The diocese covers 18 towns and two cities in northern Nueva Ecija.

Vergara wrote local officials after the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) granted LTG Prime Horizon Inc. a permit to operate STL.

In the STL-related operations, reports of jueteng proliferate elsewhere.

In his letter, Vergara attached a copy of a certificate issued by the PCSO's corporate board secretary, which said that "no opposition to the (STL) will be undertaken (in experimental areas) when there is opposition or objections expressed" by certain officials or sectors.

The letter cited the bishops as among the officials whose objection would be taken into "serious consideration" before a permit is granted for STL operations. —Analiza Bogas, Inquirer Central Luzon

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE INACCURATE NEWS REPORTS ON FAMILY'S BRAND TRADEMARK

Recently there are inaccurate and misleading news reports and attention getting headliners regarding the FAMILY'S BRAND trademark belonging to Universal Canning, Incorporated (UCI) that have appeared namely on ANC news Channel on February 27, 2008, and in the business sections of Philippine Daily Inquirer, Malaya and other newspapers on February 28, 2008.

This notice is for the general information of all those persons, corporations and other entities such as suppliers, distributors and customers who transact or intend to engage in business with UCI and its sister company Zamboanga Universal Fishing Corporation in order to correct any wrong impressions and mistaken perceptions which the aforesaid inaccurate news reporting may have caused to their patrons.

UCI has several pending legal disputes with Pagoda Philippines, Inc. (Pagoda) before the Philippine Intellectual Property Office (IPO), Department of Health (DOH), Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD), the Regional Trial Court and the Court of Appeals. Some had even reached the Supreme Court.

The original dispute stemmed from UCI's Trademark Application no. 4-1998-09114 for "FAMILY'S BRAND" canned sardines under class 29, filed on December 15, 1998. **It was allowed for publication by the IPO**, but it is being opposed by Pagoda in Inter Partes Case No.14-2003-00060.

UCI was likewise the assignee of YCB Trademark Application no. 4-1993-87228 for "FAMILY" canned goods and other food products under class 29, filed on August 3, 1993. **It was allowed for publication by the IPO**, but it is also being opposed by Pagoda in Inter Partes Case No. 14-1999-00059.

Pagoda filed its Trademark Application no. 4-1999-09740 for "Family" canned goods and other food products only on December 17, 1999, **more than one year after UCI's trademark application and more than 6 years after its assignor YCB's trademark application.**

Pagoda then filed a petition to cancel registration of "FAMILY'S BRAND" sardines of UCI with the Bureau of Food and Drugs under BFAD Food Case No. FM-02-001. **The Director of BFAD dismissed Pagoda's petition for lack of merit and decided in favor of UCI.**

Pagoda appealed the BFAD Decision to the Office of the Secretary, Department of Health. **The Secretary of Health affirmed the Dismissal by BFAD of Pagoda's petition for lack of merit and decided in favor of UCI.**

There is another case for infringement and unfair competition between UCI and Pagoda pending with the Regional Trial Court of Manila (RTC) under Civil Case No. 02-102988. Pagoda moved for the suspension of the proceedings in said RTC case to which UCI conformed and the court proceedings is suspended**. There is an existing preliminary injunction issued against Pagoda prohibiting it from marketing, distributing, manufacturing and selling canned sardines bearing Pagoda's mark "Family".**

Pagoda also moved for suspension of the proceedings in the two IPO cases involving Class 29. UCI opposed the two separate motions for suspension. **IPO then denied Pagoda's motions and set the said cases for hearing anew.** However, on the subsequent hearing dates, Pagoda through its counsel asked UCI's counsel to defer future hearings in the two cases because there appears to be a serious effort to settle the cases amicably.

UCI is a fully mechanized semi-automated, HACCP accredited canning factory based in Zamboanga City. Together with its sister company Zamboanga Universal Fishing Corporation and its group of companies, it is employing more than 2000 employees. Since 1998 up to present, UCI is manufacturing and distributing its FAMILY'S BRAND sardines and other variants all over the Philippines.

In addition to UCI's FAMILY'S BRAND line of sardines, **UCI is proud to announce that it has acquired and became the owner of the popular trademark "MASTER" sardines and its variants including their formulations and ingredients.**

UCI is constrained to make this public statement to reveal the truth and to discourage inaccurate news reporting.

UNIVERSAL CANNING, INCORPORATED
Calle San Isidro, Ayala, Zamboanga City

VICTOR L. CHAN LAW OFFICE
Suite 101 Sunrise Condominium, 226 Ortigas Avenue, Greenhills, San Juan City
Counsel for Universal Canning, Incorporated

Floods isolate 11,000 Catanduanes families

VIRAC, CATANDUANES—LANDslides and floods blocked all access to villages in this province where 11,000 families await aid that would be delivered by a Navy boat.

The Philippine Navy will provide the boat to bring rice and other food items to the families who had been isolated since Monday.

Joseph Cua, governor and chair of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Committee (PDCC), said the boat would leave the port of Legazpi City in Albay for the town of San Andres.

From there, the PDCC and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will transport the government-procured rice and food packs to the families.

More rice

Cua said the PDCC was requesting an additional 5,000 bags of rice from the DSWD. The department earlier allotted 400 bags of rice and 600 food packs on Feb. 29. The items were delivered to Catanduanes soon by a Philippine Air Force helicopter.

Cua said 500 bags of rice had already been delivered to Catanduanes and another team, besides, last week. The church relief office Caritas is helping, too.

The government, through the National Food Authority, was selling rice directly to consumers to help prevent a food shortage. "We are in the same situation as Eastern Samar, only that we do not have many casualties," Cua said.

The governor said he saw for himself the situation in two villages, Sipi and Binanderan in Bato town, where families were in danger of starving as a result of floods brought by continuing rains since Feb. 26.

Many farmers were not able to dry their fiber, while rice farmers failed to dry their harvest of "palay," he added.

Strong waves prevented fishermen from going out to sea, he said.

Roads closed

Major roads were closed, preventing the delivery of rice to the towns and the capital municipality of Virac.

Ignacio T. Dalmacion, district engineer, told the PDCC yesterday that a circumferential road that links several towns had been rendered impassable.

Raging waters from swollen rivers washed out spillways in the towns of Panganiban and Viga, while landslides blocked roads in San Andres, Bato and Gig-antes towns.

The PDCC received a report that four houses were buried by a landslide in one village in Gigantes. In Bato town, floodwaters were a meter deep in the poblacion as of 4 a.m. yesterday.

Calamity

In two Albay towns, more than 3,000 families have been evacuated and 18 people were injured, missing or heavy rains yesterday brought flash floods, less than 12 hours after an earthquake shook the Bicol region and the Visayas, provincial disaster officials said.

Jules Nolet, operations officer of the Albay PDCC, said 16 fishermen in Tabaco City and eight fishermen in Tiwi town were reported missing.

A total of 1,300 families in 47 villages in Tabaco were moved to 23 evacuation centers.

In Tiwi, he said, 73 families had already been evacuated as of 10 a.m. One house was reported damaged.

Swollen rivers and falling rocks were also reported in Barangay Imbasan. A spillway was damaged in Barangay Naga.

Floodwaters swallowed a bridge in Maslog-on town, blocking the main route to Tabaco. All types of vehicles were barred from passing through the pedestrian of Maslogon.

Tabaco Mayor Krisel Lagman, in a mobile phone interview, described the floods in downtown Tabaco as "waist-deep" and the river was just "almost one foot from under the bridge."

Gov. Joey Salceda ordered the suspension of all elementary and high school classes in the province.

The floodwaters started to rise after a magnitude 6.3 earthquake shook Bicol and the Visayas past 7:8 p.m. Monday.

Albay is still in state of calamity after officials warned that many communities are still under threat of landslides and floods.

A 6.5 magnitude earthquake shook parts of Eastern Visayas Monday night although no damage was reported.

More victims of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology station in Palo town, Leyte, said the tremor was felt in most northeast of Catarman, Northern Samar.

Persons Operation and Rehabilitation Agusilar, Inquirer Southern Luzon, and Joey Gabieta, Inquirer Visayas

RESIDENTS of several villages in Albay camp out in a school after fears of landslides drove them out of their homes.

Cops raid sex shop

By Carla P Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—WHITE TIP LINGERIE, a sweet shop opened on the same day its host mall did on Friday, is immediately caught the attention of city shoppers. Stores about it opened by word of mouth, and stores came in with almost its stores—a giant doll's arms a female organ, vibrators, condoms and other sex paraphernalia.

Authorities were not amused. However. On Monday, they closed down TTT China Commercial on the second floor of 888 Gaisano Super Mall, Cabahug Street.

Senior Insp. Lamin Ambrader said the sex dolls, vibrators and sex dolls, which were seized along with condoms on introducers, were considered "pornographic materials." The display and sale of the sex gadgets violated Article 201 of the Revised Penal Code, as amended by Presidential Decree Nos. 969 and 9561, and of Section could face a prison term of six years or a fine of P6,000 (US$138), or both, he said.

Victorio Peñarete III of the City Legal Office said the shop was also operating without a city permit.

Police and city personnel inventoried the stuff after receiving complaints from the public. Earlier, they bought a gadget for P600 from Luigi Tan, who was in charge of the store.

Tan told the police and reporters that a friend, Glenn Ambrosette of Bulo City, owned the shop, and that she had asked him to manage it for a few days. Mall records, however, identified the owner as Glenn Ambrosette, according to Canlom Tg executive vice president for operations of 888 Chinatown Square.

Ambrosette is the wife of Eric, who also runs the family casino Chain, Tg added.

Police released Tan but would file charges against him and the shop owner, Ambrosette said.

In an interview, Tan said he did not know how much the confiscated merchandise cost, but Ambrosette placed the figure at several thousands of pesos. An inflatable female doll is priced at P6,000, the officer said.

Tg explained that to clear application for a stall, the shop owners listed only "toy goods" as the products they would be selling.

Because of this experience, Tg said the mall would be stricter in inspecting the merchandise of tenants. He assured the public that the display of similar products would not happen again because the mall owners wanted clean establishments to be child-friendly.

Prosecutor Jose del Rosario said prosecutors would not be held liable for the officers because it did not know the actual products of the shop.

Fr. Antonio Bonvarde, head of the Social Action Center of the Diocese of Bacolod, said business proprietors "must be sensitive enough" and respect the "highly conservative and religious" culture of most Filipinos.

NEWSBRIEFS

■ LEGAZPI CITY

Mining firm gets court OK for rehab

BENGUET Corp. Lafayette Philippines Inc. (LPI) will resume operations in the inland basin of Rapu-Rapu after a court granted in February its petition for rehabilitation.

Reynaldo Juan, acting regional executive director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, said the court also stopped LPI creditors from seizing any piece of LPI property as debt payment.

It prevented LPI from selling any piece of its property.

Joel Locorbo Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ LUCENA CITY

Army says it foiled rebels' Mt. Banahaw bid

GUINOBATAN soldiers said they foiled an attempt by communist guerrillas to establish Mt. Banahaw in a clash yesterday in Santiago, Quezon, that left two rebels dead and several others wounded.

Lt. Col. Antonio Parlade Jr., spokesman of the AFP Forces attacked a group of about 20 rebels, led by a certain Oscar "Ka Bart" Alcantara, head of the CPP's Melito Glor Command.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ BUKIDNON CITY

SSS stops issuing IDs as machine bogs down

THE SOCIAL Security System (SSS) has stopped issuing ID cards since last year as its processing machine in its central office in Manila bogged down.

Alex Leo Mesias, inspector-in-charge of the SSS in Iligan City, said the central office had not given any advisory as to when the machine would become serviceable.

Mesias said clients who have already submitted their data before the machine bogged down could still transact with the agency by showing their claim stubs.

Abdul Bimbi, Inquirer Mindanao

■ COTABATO CITY

Maguindanao town put in state of calamity

LOCAL officials on Monday placed Datus in Barangay LGSE in Maguindanao under a state of calamity when about 80 percent of the low-lying town was submerged by flood waters.

The floods led to the collapse of several LGU-gallon dikes that protected waters in towns facing 5,000 villages. The Office of Civil Defense said Benja Ramg, LGU official in charge for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, said the LGU was checking the extent of damage as brought by the floods in Datu Piang, a town next to LGU.

Charlie T. Fortuna, Inquirer Mindanao

INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Even without JDV, Pangasinan is for GMA

By Gabriel Cardenas
Dagupan City

'Nobody even rallies behind JDV now. His anti-GMA sentiment will just be a voice in the wilderness'

PANGASINENSES WHO VOTED for the first time 16 years ago may have known only one Speaker of the House of Representatives: Jose de Venecia Jr.

In their eyes, De Venecia was also the most powerful and influential local politician in the province's most recent history, especially during the term of another Dagupan (province mate), former President Fidel Ramos of Aguipo town.

With a stroke of a pen and a few calls here and there there, De Venecia would make things happen...from a project funded, get somebody appointed to a government position, until even make political opponents retire.

But the people woke up one morning in January and suddenly found that the Venecia man no longer Speaker. The "Pangasinan idol," despite his wealth and power, was not invincible, after all.

The saddest part of it was that, for the first time, representatives from the province did not support De Venecia as a bloc, as they always've done when he vied for the speakership in the past.

Party decision

Of the five representatives outside of De Venecia's family district, only Rep. Victor Agbayani (second district) stuck it out with him. Arthur Celeste (first district), Rachel Arenas (third district) and Concada Estrella III (sixth district) voted to declare the post of Speaker vacant while Marcos Cojuangco (fifth district) abstained.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo and De Venecia have broken their alliance but Pangasinan officials say the province is still behind the President.

"It was a party decision and we had no choice but to toe the party line," Celeste and Estrella said in separate interviews. Celeste belongs to the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi) while Estrella is a member of the Nationalist People's Coalition.

"But I know that (De Venecia) understood my decision, being a party man himself," Celeste said. He said he had already voted for De Venecia as Speaker in the past and this time, he said, he wanted to show his loyalty to his political party.

Celeste, who now chairs the House committee on national defense, first ran as an independent and joined Lakas-CMD after his election as representative. "But I was elected as a second-class member in Lakas," he said. "And worse, when I ran for my second term, a Lakas candidate was put up against me."

It was then, he said, that he transferred to Kampi, where he had "been treated very well."

Estrella said he could have voted for De Venecia had there been an election for the speakership. Dagupan City Rep. Prospero Sto. Tomas was unopposed for the post.

Sad news

To some, De Venecia's ouster was sad news; to others, it did not matter at all.

As a friend and ally, Dagupan City Mayor Alipio Fernandez Jr. said he was sad that De Venecia was replaced. "Pangasinan representatives have their own affiliations. In the local government, for matter had no impact because the support to both (for De Venecia and President Macapagal-Arroyo)," Fernandez said.

The local weekly Sunday Punch had reported that the local chapter of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines passed a resolution expressing support for the Arroyo, whose industrial home province is Pangasinan. Her mother, the late Evelina Bautista, was from Binalonan town.

"She is our President," said San Fabian Mayor Maximilo Llaneza, who sponsored the league's resolution that was signed by 16 governors. However, told the Sunday Punch that "this doesn't mean that we are not supporting our congressmen, the former Speaker."

De Venecia himself had told the Inquirer during his first visit to Dagupan after his ouster that Pangasinan would remain a politically potent province. But he said: "Kung mga pro-Gloria tayong, maganda-ganda na lahat sila. Ba, we will run on the issue of they are for Gloria, we are against Gloria."

New leader

Nursery Gilbuk Mayor Ramon Morales said that after De Venecia, Gov. Amado Espino Jr. had emerged as the new political leader of the province. "What the national leadership is looking for now is who can assure the support of the President. It is only Governor Espino who can do that," Morales said.

Espino, a Kampi member, severed an representative for two terms in the second district. He and the governor's brother, Oscar, formed Espino's fight that pitted him against a De Venecia-backed candidate and a former vice governor.

Morales said that, even with De Venecia's falling out with the President, Pangasinan had remained solid behind the Arroyo. "What we are talking about here is no longer politics but how Pangasinan can become more progressive. We also talk about the economic aspect, who can deliver it," he said.

Reforesting mangroves + mitigating global warming

By Yolanda Sonio-Fuentes
Bolinao, Pangasinan

THEY ONLY WANTED to stop the deforestation and degradation of marine resources—their main source of livelihood—in Bolinao, Pangasinan, but in their own little ways, they are helping mitigate the serious problem of global warming.

Members of Salaisko (Katulungan ng mga Nangingisda sa Salaisko) in Barangay Salaisko in Bolinao are Organizations for the Environment, a federation of 10 village-based fishermen's groups, have replanted 74 hectares of mangroves, established eight marine sanctuaries with a total area of 90 hectares, and helped implement livelihood projects and formulate the town's coastal development plan.

"There was a rapid reduction in our income because the fish stock had disappearing. Illegal fishing was rampant and the corals were mostly dead," Jessie Gabarin, Salaisko board chair, said. "Old residents had told us that our town used to have thick mangrove forests, but these were depleted because the trees were turned into fishponds. The mangroves were cut and used as housing materials or firewood."

Gabarin, one of the organizing pioneers, said all he knew then was that he wanted to help stop the environmental degradation. "It was only later that we found that we were helping abate global warming."

Wanted interest

Rildemar Noble, resident representative of the United Nations Development Program to the Philippines, assured the fishermen that nothing was wrong with starting projects laden with "vested interests."

"In human beings, we do things with our vested interests first," Noble said when she visited Bolinao to monitor projects of the Sagip Linggoan Gulf Project (SLGP) of the Marine Environment Resources Foundation Inc.

In the inland town of Anda, Mayor Nestor Fajardo and people who had reforested the mangrove areas several years ago were already reaping the fruits of their labor.

When a storm surge hit the town in November last year, homes in the coastal villages were spared because of the presence of mangroves. People have also learned that mangroves at sea are nurseries for fish.

Noble said she was "impressed" by the project of the fishermen, whom she described as "non-scientists but people with a lot of common sense." His collective heeded Inside to consider global warming in all their projects, just like any essential (land) plants. Like unlike terrestrial plants, mangroves store carbon in the sediments as well. less carbon means less global warming," said Severina Johns, a mangrove researcher pursuing a doctoral degree in marine science at the University of Queensland in Australia.

A hectare of mangrove forest can absorb around 20 tons of carbon each year, Johns said.

But Noble said the fishermen's efforts were not enough to counter global warming. "It is a problem that should be addressed on international, provincial, community, individual levels. All of us [should] contribute in reducing global warming," she said.

Early days

Conor Anson, president of Kaisahan, said it was in 1999 when the Marine Environment Resources Foundation (MERF) and the government started the community-based coastal resources management (CBCRM).

Seeds for marine development projects were sown, including the formation of five grassroots organizations and the establishment of a mangrove nursery. Soon one in Barangay Silar and a protected area in Salingsing.

In 1997, the CBCRM project was stopped. "We coordinated with the local government to conserve. Where we had more projects, we all contributed to buy our marks," Gabarin said.

The fishermen started planting mangroves in Silar and Anindol, part of the four original member-villages of Salaisko. The others are Binabalian and Patalgongan.

The next year, the MERF and the Haribon Foundation organized implementation of the CBCRM project until 2003. The Asian Social Institute, provincial government, the Bolinao Marine Ecological Park Foundation and Ghana-South Korea, a pharmaceutical firm, contributed to the mangrove rehabilitation efforts.

Kaisahan became a partner of the SLGP for the implementation of the CBCRM programs and other activities in 2001. The original four groups of organized to 11 when more villages joined the federation.

Challenges

Challenges were plenty along the way, said Annabelle Silvarez, Salaisko secretary. She cited an incident when a resident asked then Bolinao Mayor Jesus Celeste to stop fishermen from planting mangroves in a proposed fishpond site.

"The mayor went somebody to stop us. While muddled here, we decided to for office and explained what we were doing. In the end, he told us to go on planting," Silvarez said.

In 2004, Salaisko received P2.5 million from the UNDP for the mangrove projects and constraints.

The fishermen learned some lessons in planting mangroves, Gabarin said. For one, mortality rate was high because "we did not put nets around the planted trees." During high tide, plants and dead sea grasses would smash around the plants. Without nets to protect the plants, the roots suffocated the plants.

"We will replant the areas again," Jessies said.

Salaisko had already included nets in a proposal for a P1.5 million funding, which the Philippine Tropical Conservation Foundation approved.

While most residents are already aware of environmental protection, others are stubborn, Gabarin said. Some people would gather shells in the mangrove areas, killing the plants, although these already planted with crustaceans and fish. Others, however, would drive them away, telling them to fish elsewhere.

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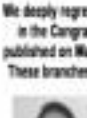
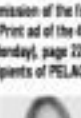
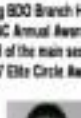
THE 4TH PELAC ANNUAL AWARDS NIGHT

Erratum:

We deeply regret the commission of the following BDO Branch Heads in the Congratulatory Print ad of the 4th PELAC Annual Awards published on March 3 (Monday), page 22 and 23 of the main section. These branches are recipients of PELAC's 2007 Elite Circle Award:







Again, our sincerest apologies. Congratulations to these awardees!

NEWS

Esperon says he rejected invitation to a coup

By Alcuin Papa

A RETIRED MILITARY OFFICER TRIED TO RE-cruit Armed Forces Chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon for a coup plot to bring down President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"I told him no way, no way," Esperon told reporters in Camp Aguinaldo yesterday.

Esperon said he would remain loyal to the government amid calls for the President to resign because of corruption scandals.

But the AFP chief would not give details of the attempt to recruit him for a coup plot and would not say whether the attempt to recruit him was made before the huge rest Arroyo rally in Makati last Feb. 29.

"There was an attempt. But it looks like he (the retired officer) is still target. It is he who has to change," he said in Filipino.

Esperon feared that he had worked under the recruiter as a young officer, "maybe he thinks he has a strong influence on me. I follow the Constitution, that is non-negotiable."

Esperon said retired officers were angered during their time. "Now, it is your turn to respect us. If you can't respect our uniform and rank, you respect the soldiers and our ranks/ties," he said.

Though he would not identify the one who tried to recruit him, Esperon, who revealed last Monday that retired soldiers were actively recruiting young officers for the Nov. 29 failed rebellion at the Manila Peninsula hotel in Makati, yesterday named one of those recruiters as former Commodore Ismael Apaez.

Esperon said Apaez was recruiting officers who are aboard of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). He said the president of the ROTC alumni, Brig. Gen. Jessy Jalandoni, who is a member of his staff, could verify the story.

But Apaez, who used pronoun at meetings with soldiers on the telephone, has not been successful in his efforts, he said.

In an interview with reporters, Apaez denied Esperon's allegations.

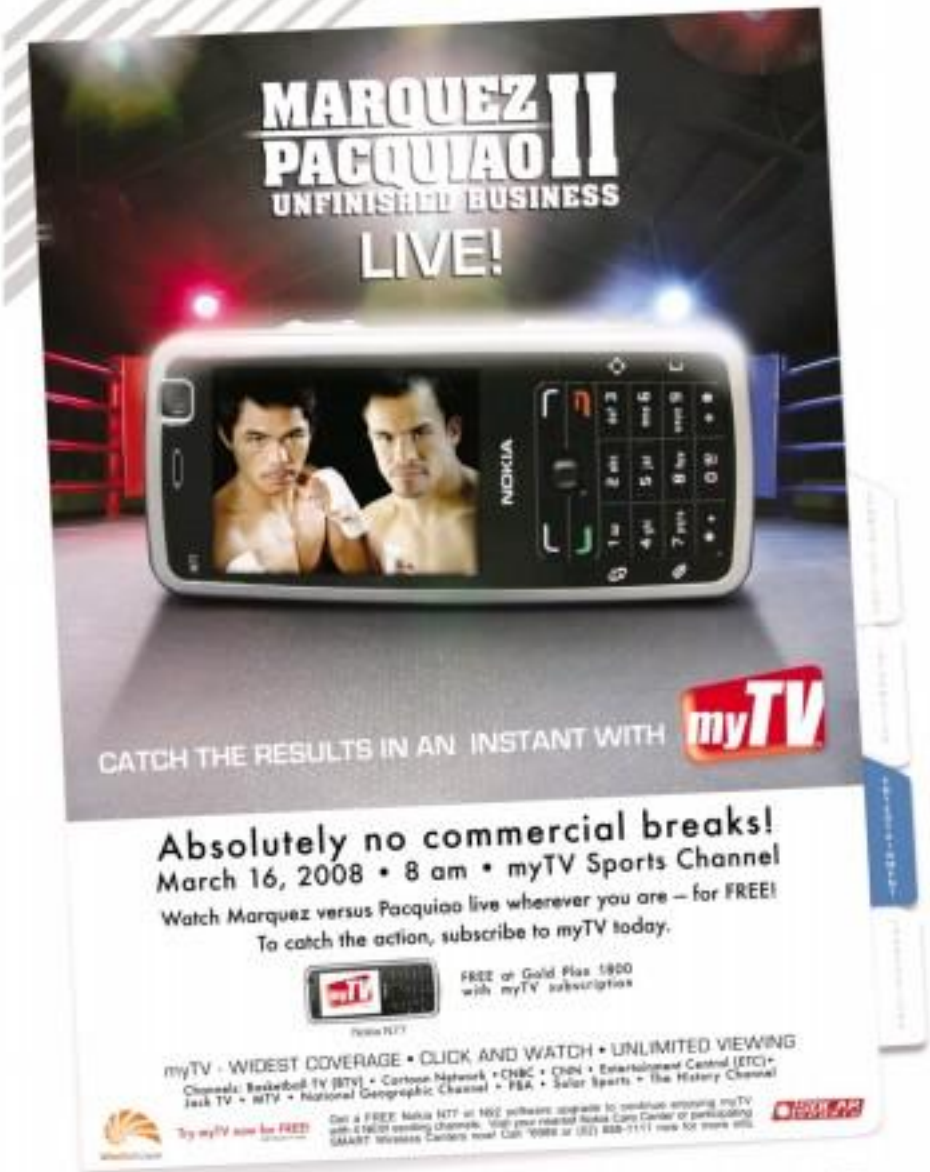
"We are not recruiting anybody," said Apaez, who is one of the leaders of the Young Edifrol Soldiers Active and Retired Military-Police for Solidarity (Starforce) which he said has a membership of 250,000 veterans who are pushing for their benefits. In 2006, the group rallied for the resignation of Ms Arroyo.

Apaez denied that he tried to recruit from ROTC alumni or that he knew Jalandoni.

"I do not even know that animal. Who's that animal he (Esperon) is mentioning?" Apaez said.

He said he had nothing to hide and that he was willing to report to Esperon's office to "enlighten" the AFP chief. "I can report there anytime. Almost twice a week, I am in Camp Aguinaldo," he said.

Apaez lashed out at Esperon for dragging his name into the reported recruitment efforts.



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DID YOU KNOW

BEFORE the Quezon Bridge crossing the Pasig River was reinforced in Quiapo, Manila, there was the Puente Colgante (suspension bridge), also known as Puente de Dilao.

Inaugurated in January 1902, the bridge was built using the most advanced European technology of the time. Contracted for the project was a French engineer who used a steel structure imported from England.

(Cont'd., Bonaheroic, Inquirer Research)

2 traders held for 36 hours rescued

By Alcuin Papa

MEMBERS OF AN ELITE POLICE UNIT rushed to go after kidnap for ransom gangs rescued two businessmen from their abductors last week.

In a press conference held in Camp Crame yesterday, Director General Avelino Razon Jr., Philippine National Police chief, announced the rescue of car dealer Alberto Cabrera and Jerry Kaligbak in Bonifacio City on Feb. 27.

Senior Insp. Leonardo Espina, chief of the elite Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response team, said the victims were held captive for 36 hours by "amateur kidnappers" who took them at gunpoint in Mutton, Quezon City on Feb. 26.

The kidnappers simultaneously contacted the two men's families and asked for the original copies of the official receipts and certificates of registration of the victims' vehicles and bank passbooks.

At 3 p.m. the following day Cabrera's family said they received another call from the kidnappers who instructed them to go to the SM South Mall in Las Piñas City with the car documents and Alberto's passbook.

"The kidnappers demanded the withdrawal of all the money in Alberto's account at the SM South Mall branch of China Bank," Espina said.

After Cabrera's family turned over the documents and passbook to his captors, Alberto withdrew P2 million from his bank account. But when he came out of the bank at 5:30 p.m., his captors were nowhere to be found, prompting Pnaro operatives to take him into custody.

Alberto later led Pnaro operatives to the kidnappers' hideout in SF Homes, Pamplona, in Las Piñas City.

The kidnappers later abandoned the vehicle, along with Kaligbak who was found inside the car.

Police are now conducting follow-up operations against the kidnappers.

QC teenager faces murder charge for death of boy

By Marlon Ramos

A TEENAGER WAS CHARGED WITH MURDER yesterday for the death of his 12-year-old neighbor last Sunday, two days after he allegedly hit the victim on the head with a stone using a slingshot.

Ricardo Imong Jr., 19, was charged in the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office for repeatedly killing Mark Leonel de Esta, a Grade 5 pupil and resident of Barangay Tatalon in Quezon City.

A Quezon City Police District's Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit report said Dr. Cora died Sunday at the East Avenue Medical Center where he was confined for two days. According to the victim's doctor, he died from a blood clot in the head.

The report said the victim was playing with another boy in a vacant lot when the suspect and his father, Ricardo Imong Sr., the caretaker of the property, arrived.

The elder Imong allegedly scolded the victim and his friend for entering the property and beat his companion, the report added.

The boy ran away while the younger Imong allegedly hit them with stones using his slingshot. The victim lost his balance when he was hit, police said.

4 alleged members of gang selling fake dollars nabbed in QC

By Marlon Ramos

QUEZON CITY POLICEMEN arrested four suspected members of a syndicate selling fake dollars during an entrapment operation in Barangay Sauyo, Quezon City, on Monday night.

Police identified the suspects as Geronimo Siplat, 48, a resident of Baguio City; Antonio Medina, 56, of 3 Sampaguita St., Mandaluyong City; Soldad Cueto, 46, of #109 Matesanto St., Sta. Mesa, Manila, and Willy Gonzales, a resident of Guadalupe Street in Sta. Mesa, Manila.

Supt. Constante Aggasid, QCPD Station 6 commander, said the four belong to an organized crime group victimizing businessmen and money changer shops in Metro Manila.

According to him, the suspects were selling fake $100 bills at P350 each.

"We have been tracking this group for quite sometime. We believe that is the same group that victimized at least two money changer stalls in Quezon City recently," he said.

An undercover policeman contacted the group a few days ago and convinced the suspects to sell him $5 million worth of fake $100 bills, Aggasid said.

The suspects, however, brought only $50 fake $100 bills when they showed up at around 5 p.m. in a fast food restaurant on Commonwealth Avenue near Tandang Sora Street, Barangay Old Balara.

"My men immediately grabbed them as soon as they received the marked money from our undercover agent," Aggasid said.

He said individuals unfamiliar with authentic US dollars would be easily fooled because the bills the group was selling were almost identical to the real ones in terms of color and size.

"But a closer examination of the fake dollar bills will show that their green markings are very different from the real ones," he explained.

Aggasid said they would file a case of economic sabotage against the four suspects.

LIGHTNING RALLY
A member of a militant group puts on a mask showing the Philippine flag with the words "US troops out!" The group, composed mostly of women, staged a lightning rally in front of the US Embassy in Manila yesterday to demand justice for a Filipino woman allegedly raped by a US serviceman in Okinawa, Japan.
AUSTIN ANTIG

New Metropolitan Theater by year's end, Lim vows

HAHALA: Mayor Alfredo Lim and television host Carmen Herrera inspect the Metropolitan Theater which is being restored to its former glory. Lim has set a December deadline for the completion of the restoration work.
NOEL CELIS

By Tina G. Santos

BY THE END OF THE YEAR, THE Metropolitan Theater—finally restored to as the "grand dame" of Manila theaters—is expected to provide a culture and arts venue for the masses.

The feat was announced yesterday by Mayor Alfredo Lim who, along with Quezon City Rep. Mary Jane Susano and movie personalities, inspected the "Met," as the theater is fondly referred to, at the Liwasang Bonifacio in Manila.

Lim has ordered the immediate restoration of the structure which has deteriorated over the past years.

He stressed the need to rehabilitate the theater because of its historical value, as well as to provide the masses with the kind of entertainment that could be seen only in live and stage shows.

The Cultural Center of the Philippines, he said, is known to cater mostly to the upper class.

"We must make culture available and attractive to the masses," Lim said. "The one that the poor will find accessible is the Met and I feel we should revive it, enact it again, the people will get to see and hear the Zarzuelas, zarsuela and other stage plays showcasing Filipino heritage and literature."

The mayor added that he would order the speedy renovation of the structure to meet the deadline which he set.

"We hope to open it to the public by December," he said. "If we have to work on it round the clock just to reach the deadline, we'll do it."

The Art Deco building, constructed in 1931 by Juan Arellano, was badly damaged during World War II. It was rebuilt in 1978 by former First Lady Imelda Marcos, but its condition again deteriorated in the '90s.

The Met finally closed down in 1996 following a long-running dispute between the Government Service Insurance System and the City of Manila over its ownership and management.

In 2004, the GSIS and city government finally agreed to set aside their differences and, with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, signed a tripartite agreement on a work action plan for the structure's restoration.

President Macapagal-Arroyo also ordered the release of P80 million to partially fund the project.

Susano, meanwhile, vowed to allot P35 million from her pork barrel for the restoration work.

She added that she intends to ask support from other lawmakers and senators, particularly Senators Loi Ejercito, Ramon Revilla and Jinggoy Estrada, who were movie stars before they joined politics.

The Met's restoration was estimated to cost over P300 million.

Bearing its heyday, the theater could accommodate 1,670 people, with 66 rows for orchestra seating, 116 in the logs and 750 in the balcony seats.

Up in arms over land use ordinance

Cop in hot water after complaint against boss

By Marlon Ramos

A DAY AFTER HE FILED A COMPLAINT against his station commander, a Quezon City policeman suddenly found himself the subject of an investigation for alleged violations of Philippine National Police rules.

SPO1 Armando Rivera, assigned at the Quezon City Police District Station 9, may face administrative charges following a statement from his station commander, Supt. Dante Pelayo.

Rivera filed a complaint the other day against Pelayo at the QCPD Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit for allegedly disarming him of his service weapon and threatening him after he arrested a hot-cockfighter for "jueteng," an illegal numbers game.

Police submitted documents to the QCPD District Investigation and Detective Management Division yesterday to help Rivera's allegations.

Supt. Felicidad Cido, IIDMD chief, said that although Pelayo did not file a formal complaint against Rivera, the documents he presented paved the way for an investigation of the incident.

"It was actually our district director (Senior Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula) who ordered me to look into this incident," Cido told the newspaper.

She said Rivera should have gone to her office to file a formal administrative case against Pelayo before he reportedly met with some reporters.

"The PNP has its own grievance committee. As a police officer, he should have exhausted all administrative remedies regarding his case before he went to the media," Cido said.

Reporters learned about the incident through a complaint Rivera filed in the QCPD Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit at Camp Rodrigo, Bantayan, Quezon City.

By Julie M. Aurelio

RESIDENTS OF FOURTH ECHO Subdivision in Batasan are seeking to nullify the Comprehensive Land Use and Zoning Ordinance passed in 2007, claiming the city ordinance was "unconstitutional."

The ordinance would reclassify certain areas in Barangays San Bernardo and Don Bosco from residential zones to "low intensity commercial areas."

Representatives of the Fourth Echo Subdivision Federation filed a petition for a temporary restraining order at the Muntinlupa City Regional Trial Court yesterday.

The petition alleged that Ordinance No. 2007-227 was passed without a public hearing, making it "illegal and unconstitutional."

Named respondents were Mayor Florencio Bermudez and City Administrator Heleno de Jesus. The petitioners were Generoso Flores, a former city councilor; Rodolfo Navarro, president of the Security Homeowners Association; Antonio Mendoza, president of Area 1 Homeowners Association in Fourth Estate and Eleanor Bhagwagar, president of Casa Filipina Homeowners Association.

The petitioners added that under Executive Order No. 72, zoning ordinances should be passed after public consultations with constituents.

In a meeting last November, the petitioners claimed the Committee on Land Use and Zoning called a "think meeting" with barangay officials but said they were not given copies of the draft.

Helen Salandres, the mayor's spokesperson, however, denied that the ordinance was passed without any public hearing. Bermudez is expected to be out of the country and would not be back until next week.

MetroBriefs

Suspected hired killer arrested

A MOTORCYCLE hired killer was arrested in Mandaluyong City before he could kill his next victim—the wife of the man he had earlier shot dead.

Released: Rafael, 28, was arrested by police operatives in front of the house of Jennifer Rosario, 32, on Gallanty Street, Mandaluyong City, on Feb. 28. "We were just in time for the arrest of the suspect who admitted being part of the group hired to kill Rosario's estranged husband they killed last September," Mandaluyong police chief, Senior Supt. Carlos de Sagun, said. He added that Rosario sought police assistance on Feb. 19, and was immediately placed under surveillance. De Sagun said the suspect did not resist arrest when he was arrested by the police. His arrest, however, was kept a secret to avoid jeopardizing the arrest of other members of the group identified only as Ateng Dante and Oscar. **Nancy C. Carvajal**

5 suspected drug dealers fall in Taguig

POLICE arrested over the weekend five suspected drug peddlers in separate operations in Taguig City. Supt. Alfred Corpus, Taguig police chief, identified one of those arrested as Randy Sombrero, 37, a barber and resident of Central Bicutan. Barangay Western Bicutan. "This is only the beginning of our intensified campaign against illegal drugs. We are already preparing for bigger and illegal drug operations in the coming months," Corpus said. On Monday, police also arrested three persons more at the PNR Silos in Barangay Western Bicutan. They were identified as Mozaric Hufamendo, Sonny Colonka and Danny Boy Serrano. The three yielded drugs and drug paraphernalia. The last suspect to be arrested was Danilo Untalasco, Jr., a resident of Fairview Street in Barangay Tuktukan, when seen on the police watch list for his alleged involvement in drug-related activities. **Julie M. Aurelio**

US attacks militants in Somalia

KISMAYU, SOMALIA—TWO missiles hit a house in southern Somalia on Monday in an attack the United States said was directed at "a known al-Qaida terrorist."

It was the fourth US air strike in 14 months in Somalia, where Washington believes Islamists are giving shelter to wanted al-Qaida figures.

"The attack was against a known al-Qaida terrorist," Pentagon spokesperson Bryan Whitman said in Washington.

"We have reported recently that, we will continue to pursue terrorist operations and their operatives wherever we may find them," he said, declining to provide details of the operation.

Residents of Goldeg, a remote forested town 220 km from the country's port city of Kismayu, said the Kenyan border, said they believed the missiles were targeting senior Islamist leaders meeting nearby.

Dobley district commissioner Ali Hussein Isse said six people were killed. A local politician, who had visited the site, said a white sedan was to be assessed, until only three were wounded.

A militant Islamist organization, the Mujahideen Youth Group, said in a posting on a website often used by al-Qaida and its supporters that the US attack had failed to hit leaders of the group.

A senior US official said it was too early to know what damage had been inflicted, or whether there were any casualties.

The Somali politician said Sheikh Hassan Turki, a local militant cleric, and other leaders of a militant Islamist group linked to al-Qaeda were meeting. The Islamists have been waging an insurgency against Somali government forces.

"The town is very tense. People have started fleeing because they fear there might be more attacks," he said.

The United States accuses Somali Islamist insurgents of harboring al-Qaida fugitives responsible for planning and executing the 1998 US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. *Reuters*

China' s cyberspace intrusions worry US

WASHINGTON—CHINA IS DEveloping weapons that would disable its enemies' space technology such as satellites in a conflict, the Pentagon said in a report released on Monday.

The annual report to the US Congress on Chinese military power also said "unauthorized" intrusions into computer networks around the world, including some owned by the US government, in the past year seem to have originated in China.

Looking at the prospect of more conventional warfare, the report said the situation in the Taiwan Strait was stable but the balance of forces continued to shift in China's favor as Taiwan had reduced defense spending in recent years.

Beijing steadily continues the Pentagon report, saying it unfairly portrays China as a military threat when it is committed to a "peaceful rise" as its economic power grows.

David Sedney, a top Pentagon China specialist, said there was no call for US alarm over China but repeated a frequent US complaint that Beijing has not made clear the reasons for its rapid military modernization and spending growth.

"I think the biggest thing for people is to be concerned about really is the fact that we don't have that kind of strategic understanding of the Chinese intentions," said Sedney deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia.

"That leads to uncertainty," he said, briefing journalists at the Pentagon on the latest report.

Sedney said recent US-China defense talks had been "surprisingly successful," yielding agreements to establish a defense hotline and a dialogue on nuclear strategy and to hold talks on each country's reports on the other's military power.

But he said China's activities in both space and cyberspace were areas of concern.

The report said: "China is developing a multidimensional program to limit or prevent the use of space-based systems by potential adversaries during times of crisis or conflict."

The report said the Chinese People's Liberation Army had developed weapons and jammers to prevent an enemy using space-based systems such as satellites.

"The PLA is also exploring satellite jammers, kinetic energy weapons, high-powered lasers, high-powered microwaves, particle beam weapons, and electromagnetic pulse weapons for counterspace applications," it said.

US officials have also expressed ly expressed concern about China's downdown of one of its defunct weather satellites in a test in January 2007.

"We continue to ask the Chinese to sit down and talk to us about that test and they haven't," Sedney said.

The United States flew spurt a defense satellite of its own with a missile from a Navy ship last month. The Pentagon said that was done purely to prevent personal harm to people.

Under the heading "Cyberwarfare Capabilities," the report said of that intrusion apparently from China into computer networks used "many of the shifts and exploitation that would also be required for computer network attack."

It said it was not clear if the intrusion were carried out or backed by the Chinese military but "developing capabilities for cyberwarfare is consistent with authoritative PLA writings on this subject."

The Pentagon report can be found at: http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/China--Military--Report--08.pdf. *Reuters*

VILLAGERS crowd near the crash site at a hill in Banskharka, near Kathmandu, on March 6. The people were killed.

Chopper carrying UN staff crashes in Nepal

KATHMANDU—TEN PEOPLE were killed when a helicopter carrying United Nations officials crashed in bad weather over hilly terrain near Nepal's capital on Monday, police and airport officials said.

A police officer in Kathmandu said 18 bodies had been recovered. The helicopter was carrying seven UN personnel and three crew, a spokesperson at the UN headquarters in New York said.

It was flying UN officials on an arms monitoring mission at the camps of former Maoist rebels who joined the government after a landmark peace deal in 2006.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had expressed his "great sorrow" after learning of the crash, UN spokesperson Michel Montas said.

The helicopter went missing on its way to Kathmandu from Simikhol, about 60 km from the Nepali capital.

"Police have already reached the site," Ramesh Mishra, an airport official, said. "It is raining there."

The UN Mission in Nepal said local authorities had told it that the helicopter had been found and that there were fatalities. It has sent a party by road to the site to seek additional information. *Reuters*

28 al-Qaida suspects arrested

RIYADH—SAUDI ARABIA SAID on Monday it had arrested 28 people suspected of seeking to regroup al-Qaida's wing in the oil-exporting kingdom to carry out a "terror campaign."

The official Saudi Press Agency said those detained were part of a total of 56 suspects arrested in a drive to round up Qaida members in recent months, and "belonged to the deviant group (al-Qaida) ... and received directions to rebuild the group and start a terrorist campaign in the kingdom."

The suspects were using a recruiting front, al-Qaida's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahri to help raise money from ordinary Saudis, SPA said, citing a source in the ministry of interior.

"The bearer of this message is one of our trusted brothers, therefore please give him your donations for hundreds of the families of captives and martyrs in Pakistan and Afghanistan," Zawahri said in the audio recording aired by state television.

SPA said the recording was brought into the kingdom via the mobile telephone of a "person who had visited Mecca."

The US-allied Muslim kingdom detained 28 Qaida militants in Mecca, Medina, Riyadh and an area near the country's northern borders in December.

Saudi-owned al-Arabiya television said at the time that some militants were arrested on suspicion of planning attacks during the annual Muslim hajj pilgrimage to Mecca.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter and home to Islam's holiest sites, has been the target of attacks by militants linked to al-Qaida since 2003. Previously militants opposed to the royal family had seized control of Mecca's Grand Mosque in 1979. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

5 killed in Pakistan blast

LAHORE—At least five people were killed on Tuesday in a suspected suicide truck-bomb attack on a Pakistan naval college in the eastern city of Lahore, officials said. There were several other blasts heard in the vicinity, but it was not immediately clear if they were separate explosions or linked to the initial attack. A navy spokesperson told Reuters that a suicide bomber, possibly two of them, had driven a truck to the entrance of the Pakistan Navy War College in the historic city of Lahore, about 260 km south-east of the capital, Islamabad. He said the bombers and one navy staffer had died, but police put the toll at five dead. *Reuters*

Ukraine warns of 'gas war' with Russia

MOSCOW—Russia on Monday sharply reduced gas supplies to neighboring Ukraine in a debt dispute, prompting Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko to warn of a possible new "gas war" with Moscow. The European Union, which relies heavily on Russian natural gas piped through Ukraine, urged the two sides to find an agreement or a new reminiscent of a 2006 standoff that led to disruptions in EU gas supplies. Russian state-run gas monopoly Gazprom said it was forced to cut gas supplies by 25 percent after Ukraine failed to pay a $600-million debt, and that EU supplies would not be affected. *AFP*

Iraq bombs kill 19

BAGHDAD—Two bomb blasts killed 19 people in Baghdad on Monday, police and Iraqi security forces said, despite increased security across the capital for a historic visit by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. In the worst incident, 15 people were killed and 29 wounded when an Iraqi army patrol was hit by a suicide car bomb in central Baghdad's Bab al-Mu'adham area, said Maj. Gen. Qasim Moussawi, spokesperson for security coordinators in Baghdad. The dead included Iraqi soldiers, US-backed neighborhood security police and civilians. The US military said Ahmadinejad's visit to Iraq, including two soldiers, were killed and 10 wounded when a suicide bomber rammed a minibus into an Iraqi army checkpoint in Ghuraer in eastern Baghdad. *Reuters*

Egypt arrests dozens from opposition

CAIRO—Security forces detained dozens of members of Egypt's opposition Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo raids on Monday targeting rival activists privately condemned in local newspapers as a crackdown due in April, the Brotherhood said. The Islamist group said 66 people were detained in raids on homes across Egypt, from the southern provinces of Qena in northern Luxor to the Nile Delta, where the Brotherhood has a strong popular base. Egyptian security sources put the total number of Brotherhood activists at 86, and said the men were accused of belonging to a banned group, possessing antigovernment literature and organizing unauthorized meetings. *Reuters*

15 dead in Kenya tribal war

NAIROBI—Fresh tribal violence claimed at least 15 lives in Kenya's Rift Valley region, police said on Monday, while political rivals discussed their new deal to share power and tackle root causes of the strife. "At least 15 people died on Sunday in their houses, six torched with machetes and three shot dead," police commander said. Police said attackers, armed with machetes and guns, pounced on their victims while they slept. *AFP*

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The WORLD

Edna Lawrence B. Cuaresma

Three-nation crisis grips Latin America

CARACAS—LATIN AMERICA SCRAMBLED TO defuse a three-nation crisis that threatens the region's stability after Venezuela and Ecuador cut diplomatic ties with Colombia and ordered troops to their neighbor's border.

The Organization of the American States, the region's top diplomatic body, will hold a crisis session in Washington on Tuesday to press for a negotiated end to a dispute that erupted after a weekend Colombian raid to kill a rebel inside Ecuador.

Ecuador's President Rafael Correa will also start a five-nation tour of the region—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Venezuela—to drum up support for talks aimed at defusing the crisis.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, a former guerrilla and a close leftist ally of Venezuela and Ecuador, said other Latin American countries should not become involved in the dispute.

"This conflict ... is beginning to destabilize regional relations," said Mario Giro, Italy's deputy foreign minister for Europe, who is visiting Venezuela on Wednesday.

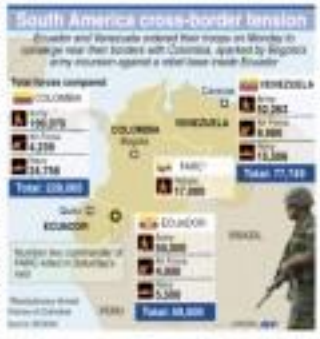
"This conflict ... is beginning to destabilize regional relations," said Mario Giro, Italy's deputy foreign minister for Europe, who is visiting Venezuela on Wednesday.

Chavez and Correa expelled Colombia's diplomats from their capitals on Monday.

Colombia also backed the new move by accusing Chavez of funding Latin America's oldest leftist insurgency—a charge denied by the anti-U.S. president's aides.

Despite the three leaders' belligerent talk and the risk of military missteps, political analysts said a conflict was unlikely as leaders draw from speeches to mobilize their people and bolster their popularity ahead of elections.

Chavez, the leader of a growing "bloc of" Latin American left-wing presidents, may fire up his supporters by challenging Uribe but he can ill afford to lose food imports from Colombia as his economy shrinks in his Opec nation, analysts said. Reuters



Criticisms overshadow Medvedev's landslide

MOSCOW—WESTERN CRITICISM and dozens of opposition arrests in Moscow on Monday overshadowed Dmitry Medvedev's triumph in a presidential election to replace Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Medvedev won 71.2 percent of Sunday's vote, crushing his nearest rival, Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov, who got 17.8 percent, the central elections commission said.

MEDVEDEV

Medvedev, the first deputy prime minister and head of gas monopoly Gazprom, takes over from Putin in May when Putin will become prime minister.

But allegations that the election was managed made the poll tainted the landslide victory.

The sole Western observer mission present, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), said the poll failed to reflect Russia's "democratic potential."

"We should throw a no-confidence in this election," PACE mission chief Andreas Gross told journalists.

Western opinion offered qualified congratulations to Medvedev, while French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner described the election as "Russian-style, with a victory known in advance."

Russia's first lawmaking anti-spoken Kremlin critics took to the streets of Moscow and Saint Petersburg.

In the capital, riot police arrested dozens of people at a peaceful, but unauthorized march, including Nikita Belykh, head of the opposition Union of Right Forces party.

Police grabbed scores of protesters as they pulled out placards or flags and, in many cases, as they were still approaching the person area from a nearby metro station.

Moscow city police's press service declined to give a number for those arrested, while a spokesperson for the mayor's office, Mikhail Solomennov, told AFP "several instigators" were detained for aggressive behavior towards the police.

In Saint Petersburg, close loyalist rammed Putin opponent Garry Kasparov led an unsanctioned rally by some 3,000 demonstrators and said Medvedev was an "illegitimate figure."

Medvedev's first duty as president will be to name a prime minister. Putin, whose ex-Gazprom ex-aides have a quarter of gas supplies to Ukraine over unpaid debts—a dispute that underlined EU fears of overreliance on Russia's massive energy resources.

Intel speculators rocketed Gazprom stock shares in anticipated Medvedev will exercise reform his veteran ex-KGB officer Putin, is serving as prime minister. AFP

UN imposes new sanctions on defiant Iran

UNITED NATIONS—THE UN Security Council stiffened sanctions on Iran on Monday for refusing to suspend nuclear enrichment and other sensitive activities, but Tehran dismissed the decision as illegal.

There were 14 votes in favor, no abstentions, and Libya, the domestic, abstained. Previous sanctions resolutions were adopted unanimously in December 2006 and March 2007, but council envoys said Monday's message to Iran was a strong one.

Iran denounced the current and previous resolutions as violations of international law and said they only hardened the 15-nation Security Council's standing.

"The credibility of the Security Council ... is rapidly downgraded to a mere tool of the national foreign policy of just a few countries," Iran's UN ambassador, Mohammad Khazaee, told the council before the vote.

He also dismissed as "baseless" new US intelligence suggesting Iran had conducted an intensive study into building atomic weapons, saying his country's nuclear program "has been, is and will remain absolutely peaceful." Speaking at the opening of a meeting of the UN nuclear watchdog's governing board in Vienna, Mohamed ElBaradei, the agency's head, urged Tehran to clear up the matter swiftly.

"I urge Iran to be as active and cooperative as possible in working with the agency to clarify this matter of serious concern," ElBaradei told the 35-nation policy-making board of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The unanimous resolution calls for more travel and financial curbs on Iranian individuals and companies and makes some restrictions mandatory. It also expands a previous partial ban on trade in items with both civilian and military uses to cover some of all such technology to Iran.

The new resolution adds the names of 13 individuals and 12 companies to the list of people and firms suspected of aiding Iran's nuclear and missile programs. One of the individuals is Brig. Gen. Mohammad Reza Naqdi, who it says had links to elite IRGC units.

In addition, its calls for increased vigilance over Iranian financial institutions and says countries should be especially wary of two large Iranian banks—Bank Melli and Bank Sedehat.

Dealings with Iran's Bank Sepah—were banned last year.

Tehran has so far ignored all council and IAEA resolutions demanding it freeze its uranium enrichment program, which can produce fuel for nuclear power plants or atomic weapons.

Diplomats describe the new resolution as an incremental tightening of the screws from the two previous resolutions. They said this was the most Washington could get after a surprising US intelligence report released in December said Iran had scrapped an atom bomb program in 2003.

The five permanent council members—the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia—and Germany, which is not on the council, agreed in Berlin on Jan. 22 on a draft text setting a third round of sanctions against Tehran.

Washington had hoped for a swift vote on the sanctions text, but negotiations dragged on for six weeks.

It was clear since January that the new sanctions would pass, since they had the backing of all permanent council members—including Russia and China, which have close business ties with Iran—and its nonpermanent members.

But the council's European components—Britain, France and Germany—wanted to send the strongest possible message to Iran by getting as close to unanimity as possible. Reuters

Israel continues Gaza strikes, more promised

GAZA CITY—ISRAELI WARplanes early Tuesday unleashed air raids on the north of the Gaza Strip, killing two Palestinians and wounding two others, a Palestinian medical source said.

Israel had vowed on Monday to keep hitting Gaza even as troops pulled out of the Hamas-run territory after clashes that killed more than 120 Palestinians and dealt a major blow to efforts that peace talks.

A first raid against Gaza City killed one person while the second robbed one person and wounded two. The victims were not immediately identified.

A military spokesperson in Tel Aviv said that the Israeli air force had "standard a group of terrorists who were preparing to fire rockets at Israel."

An Israeli military source said a rocket fired from the Beit Hanoun district north of Gaza City on Monday had smashed into 4 homes in the southern Israeli town of Sderot, but caused no injuries.

"We are not prepared to show any tolerance, period. And we will respond. Our reaction is not limited to a specific operation or day," Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told a meeting of his Kadima party in Jerusalem on Monday.

"The operation will not end before we achieve our goals and our first goal is a significant reduction of Qassam and Grad rocket fire against Israeli civilians," he said, referring to rockets used by Gaza militants.

In northern Gaza, residents returned from their homes to pick through the rubble after the deadliest Israeli military blitz on the territory in years.

"My whole life, I have never seen massacres like this," cried Abla Abd Rabbih, 42, raising her hands to the sky as she sat on a demolished door in the northern town of Jabaliya that bore the brunt of the Israeli strikes.

The bloody assault caused heated international condemnation, and caused moderate Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas to cut contacts with the Israelis, though on Monday he reiterated his willingness to seek a truce.

EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, holding talks in Israel, urged the Palestinians to renounce peace talks despite the bloodshed. AFP

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Construction of RHU, Rehabilitation, Repair and Improvements

This CY's Bicol Sanitarium's 2007 intention to apply this year of Php 7,000,000.00 for being duly qualified to bid for the Construction of Rural Health Unit (RHU), Rehabilitation, Repair and Improvements including other related works in Bicol Sanitarium.

Interested contractors may secure the Instructions of Letters of Intent (LOI) from prospective bidders signed by authorized officials of the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) starting March 5, 2008 at the Bicol Sanitarium, San Pedro, Cabugao, Camarines Sur and secure the Eligibility documents from March 5 to March 19, 2008 during office hours from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

Prospective bidders may be requested to submit their Letters of Intent and Eligibility documents not later than March 19, 2008, 10:00 AM at the Office of the Provincial Engineer, Camarines Sur.

Bidding shall be conducted on March 20, 2008 at 10:00 AM at the Bicol Sanitarium, San Pedro, Cabugao, Camarines Sur and is open to prospective bidders having the eligibility clearance and are invited to participate in the bidding.

The Bicol Sanitarium reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect therein and accept the bid which is most advantageous to the government.

Bidding documents are available for the interested bidders for a non-refundable fee of Php 5,000.00.

Contractors may secure the Instructions to Bidders, Plans, Specifications, Bill of Materials, Terms of Reference and other bidding documents from the Office of the Provincial Engineer, San Pedro, Cabugao, Camarines Sur.

Bids must be duly accompanied by a bid security in the form of a cash, cashier's/manager's check, bank draft/guarantee, irrevocable letter of credit, surety bond callable on demand, or any combination thereof in accordance with the provisions of RA 9184 and its IRR.

Bid opening shall be on March 20, 2008 at 10:00 AM at the Bicol Sanitarium, San Pedro, Cabugao, Camarines Sur and is open to prospective bidders.

Bids must be delivered on or before March 20, 2008, 10:00 AM at the Bicol Sanitarium, San Pedro, Cabugao, Camarines Sur. All bids must be accompanied by a sworn statement, among others, that the bidder is not blacklisted or barred from bidding by any government agency.

For more information, please refer to:

DR. ANGELO S. MARTINEZ JR., CESO III
Provincial Director

Date: March 5, 2008

Singapore best place for Asian expats, says survey

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
Regional Office No. IVA
3rd Flr. Anderson Bldg. E. Rod. Puerto, Cabanatuan City
Telefax No. 3000

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATIONS FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMITS (AEPTS)

Notice is hereby given that the following Corporations/Individuals have filed with this Regional Office applications for Alien Employment Permits:

Name and Address of Employer/Principal	Name of Foreign National/Position	Position
1. LUZON NATIONAL INDUSTRIES, INC. 1271 Brgy. Luzon, Cabanatuan City	Mr. Jin Wang Liu Director	Liaison Officer
2. PHIL. INTERNATIONAL PHARMACEUTICALS, INC. 1111 Brgy. Rizal, Cabanatuan City	Mr. Hideo Kawahara Japanese	Consultant/Trainer
3. TRANSTOWN OPTICAL PHILIPPINES, INC. 123 Brgy. Mangandingay, Cabanatuan City	Mr. Kenji Kawahara	Liaison Manager
4. HINO MOTORS CORPORATION 1 Hino Bldg., Ayala Ave., Makati City	Mr. Masakazu Matsumoto Japanese	Senior Supervisor, Manufacturing Engineering Department
5. UNICHEMICALS INC. 8 Rufa Bldg., Ortigas Ave. San Miguel, Cabanatuan City	Mr. Jose Daniel Gonzalez	Assistant General Manager

If you have any interest/objection to the above mentioned applications, please communicate with The Regional Director.

ATTY. RICARDO S. MARTINEZ JR., CESO III
Regional Director

Date: March 5, 2008

SINGAPORE—SINGAPORE IS the best city in the world for Asian expatriates to live in due mainly to its quality of life and low crime rate, a survey released on Tuesday by ECA International showed.

Sydney was listed second in the survey, with Hong Kong third by Melbourne and Kobe in Japan, the human resources firm said.

Rounding out the Top 10 for Asian expatriates was Copenhagen in fifth spot, followed by Canberra and Vancouver. Wellington and Yokohama shared eighth spot, with Dublin ninth.

ECA said Singapore, Australian Asia's most advanced economy, was also ranked above the other cities because it offered Asian expatriates a similar feel to their home countries.

"Home quality of living is relative to where someone comes from and to where they are going, one must take into account the home and destination country," said Lee Quane, ECA International's general manager in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong, Singapore's long-running regional rival as a business hub, was ranked 11th in the global cities list, with the territory's air pollution cited as a drawback.

Among Chinese cities, Shanghai was known as the best place for top Asian professionals while Xi'an ranked as the most hardship, according to the survey which compared living standards in 254 locations worldwide.

Beijing, host of the 2008 Olympic Games in August, fared worse than other Chinese cities such as Nanjing and Tianjin because of its concerns of pollution, the survey showed.

ECA International's annual survey is based on categories such as climate, air quality, health services, housing, political tension and personal safety.

Within Asia, Hong Kong and Tokyo were ranked joint fourth behind Singapore, Kobe and Yokohama, the survey said.

Manila was ranked 24th in Asia and 133th globally. AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE
Fairway party with Pettersen
/A29

SPORTS

Editor Rodolfo S. Malonzo Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Ochoa
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SLUGGER King's Juan Ballesteros (left) tries to dispossess Tayna Ortiz' Brian Pamilo in yesterday's game. ALEX BADAYOS

Harbour Center rips Bacchus; Burger wins

By Jasmine N. Payo

HARBOUR CENTRE ROLLED TO A TROUBLE-FREE 90-74 victory over Bacchus yesterday and extended its winning run to three in the PBL Lipovitan Amateur Sports Cup yesterday at the Rizal Coliseum.

Just five days after posting a 31-point blowout triumph over upstart Sienna Ilocos, the four-time champion made winning look easy anew as national team members Jeff Chan, Beau Belga and Jervis Cariño took charge early.

Chan shot 13 points, built on a perfect 5-of-5 shooting clip in the first half to power Skimp Pan to a 46-20 edge. He eventually finished with 17 markers.

"We're disturbing the ball better," said coach Jorge Gallent, who has set his creation seven places from the Philippine team that won the basketball gold in the 2007 Southeast Asian Games.

"Our team is jelling already but need to have problems because seven (national team) players needed to jell with the players of last conference."

Burger King also streaked to its third straight triumph via a 75-66 decision of winless Sigma Ota in the second game.

In the nightcap, Hapee overwhelmed the Nokia Philippine Youth Stars, 94-57, to join Harbour Centre on top at 3-0.

Earn Sagindoi led the early assault against the under-18 guest squad to register with 30 points.

The Pilsiggers steadily pulled away from a 54-33 advantage cor-

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PACQUIAO: In fighting shape

12 days to go: Pacquiao down to 133 lb

By Ray Learoa

HOLLYWOOD—SLOWLY BUT SURELY, MANNY PACQUIAO is trimming down to fighting shape.

The Filipino ring hero for the weighing scales at 133 pounds on Monday just three off the super featherweight limit with still 12 days to go before his World Boxing Council title showdown with Mexican champion Juan Manuel Marquez in Las Vegas.

Freddie Roach, who supervises Pacquiao's training at his Wild Card Gym here, was a bit concerned, however, when he learned that his ward skipped breakfast on Saturday.

"I warned he was a little off when he sparred for 12 rounds," said Roach. "It turned out that he did not eat breakfast and it's the most important meal of the day."

Still, Roach was glad that Pacquiao had shed off three pounds less than a week after he weighed in at 136 lb.

Roach feared that Pacquiao would be overdrained for the super-duper of 20 rounds without rest on Monday but is elated to report all his training for the 12-round bout on March 15 at the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino.

After another hour rounds Monday morning, Team Pacquiao intends to travel by country to Las Vegas, about 600 kilometers from here, although Top Rank president and "Undisputed Boxing" co-promoter Bob Arum has offered a public plane to fetch the pugilist.

Roach said he's very happy with the way their seven-week training has proceeded.

"There were no distractions—no basketball, no pool, no gambling this time," said Roach, adding that Pacquiao has promised not to fiance on boxing this year.

Roach revealed that Manny has added three conditioning Pacquiao-Hitler spar I, which ended in a controversial draw in 2004, he at no regularly reviews the Mexican's last two fights against Mayo Antonio Barrera and Bobby Juarez.

According to Roach, he still expects Marquez to fight the same way—counter punching—he did nearly four years ago because it's his best chance of beating Pacquiao.

NOTES: Veteran trainer and assistant goal Jesse Jones is the new assistant Pacquiao is likely to meet Marquez. Jaworski, who also played Pacquiao himself, will be playing it the PBA Legends has never moved away from a 10-shot.

WIDE-OPEN RACE

Nat'l Pro-Am under way

By Maureg R. Castillo

BIÑAN, LAGUNA—WITH THE 2008 Boston Manila National Pro-Am Championship a debunking champion, it seems that every team has a chance of winning.

With no stars or heroes and with Rabat Stevens and Jay Bayron splitting up, a wide-open race looms as the seventh edition of the event succeeds today in its old home, the tough, wind-swept Langer layout of The Wack Golf.

Factors turned professional at the start of the year rounding the first time the event is missing a defending champion and prompting the lively buzzes to find a new partner.

The former amateurs are still near be the pre of immigration official Woody Pascual after tournament titles teamed last year, partnering his brother, Rollins, the reigning PBA champion.

Also taking team of Gerard Gamoda now team up with Erwin Velasco, even as Rudrard Bacalso from make their appearance for the seventh straight year—the most on the top pair in the event's history—in search of a second championship.

The Alabama would-be entry in 2002 and it would be interesting to see how the amateur Final plays many from his duties as a homegrop captain in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

Rasulan Obal, younger brothers of the estranged Rodolfo, finished second in Buenos Bayron last year and are again among the pairs to watch over a course that changes character with every breath of wind.

The tournament is chiefly sponsored by G.Hot Corp. through its president and chair Ildefonso R. Bunsu and organized by the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

A cash prize of P55 to,000 will be the winning pro's purse—the biggest since Bunsu revived the fabled event in 2001 after a six-year hiatus.

Incidentally, the tournament will honor the late Eddy Tolentino in disciple stint. The event was founded in 1990 principally through the urgings of Tolentino, who died on Feb. 27 at age 68.

Meanwhile, Ebarra Quisa-hon and Gov. Ben Pinel combined for a net 73 to win yesterday's Celebrity event, which officially kicked off the proam. Rey Alic and Budgie Concebida also had a net 73 but finished second via a countback.

HARD: Pacay, with amateur partner former President Fidel V. Ramos, does his part on the eighth hole in yesterday's Celebrity Pro-Am.

Veteran pair stuns champs

UM-Tagum in hot Nestea start

By Bernie S. Aurelio

UNIVERSITY OF Mindanao-Tagum's veteran tandem of Bacarello Tayabas and Lowell Fabian pulled off an upset eight on opening day dumping its stun and experience on defending champion Mindanao State University-Iligan Total, 23-18, 23-18, yesterday in the Nestea Beach Volleyball Mindanao elimination here.

Tayabas and Fabian have been playing together for years now while it is the first tournament of MSU-IT brothers Yusop and Mimsy Abdulkarim.

"Sanda lang (We were just lucky)," said Tayabas, a 22-year-old Criminology student. "Siguro lang kasi alle. short ko makakabalik po ako. (Then) there is a new team. I know they are some back)."

Mimsy, 18, took over the slot of now-MSU coach Gabriel Tabilisalin who has gone over the tournament's 26-year old age limit.

Yusop and Tabilisalin combined last year to host the Far Eastern University pair of Arthur Aboado and Jeremy Floyd Dolinguna, 21-21, 15-21, 27-25, in the Boracay national finals.

Yesterday's 36-minute match saw UMT pulling away in the first set from a 11-10 lead while outscoring last year's regional champion, 7-3, in the homestretch to join Agusan Institute of Technology and Davao Marian Mariner Academy at the top of men's play at 2-0.

UNIVERSITY of Mindanao-Tagum's Bacarello Tayabas scores on a powerful spike off Mindanao State U's Yusop Abdulkarim.

"Malaking pa rin sa iba ang laki ng karanasan," said Yusop, referring to his younger brother who is taking up Hotel and Restaurant Management. "Ibig sa sabihin ay bata."

The UMT pair also beat UM Davao, 21-13, 21-15, in the day's first match.

Agusan Institute of Technology's setter Mitzi Mars, 21-12, 21-12, and against Mindanao Institute of Technology's 21-13, 21-19.

Davao Marian Merchant's went in the opener of the first University, 21-15, 21-23, 15-8, and last year's Mindanao runners-up Davao Doctor Regional Agricultural College, 23-18, 21-15.

Capitol University of Cagayan de Oro assisted Mindanao Christian Divine, 17-21, 23-19, 15-8, in a rain-watered rematch for its first win.

In women's matches, Xavier downed MSU-IIT, 23-18, 23-21, while first time participant Jose Maria College beat CIU, 21-16, 21-8.

The top three teams in both divisions will qualify to the Boracay finals set April 24 to 26.

Pacman must charge and gore early

PLEASE MARK THIS LINE 10 DAYS before Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines dashed for the second time with Mayweather Jose Marquez:

"The ball, as he should be, is dead. On time, as he should be, is alive and with a tendency to smile."

That's one of the memorable passages in Ernest Hemingway's "Death in the Afternoon," an all-time classic on bullfighting and, yes, life as a whole.

These words by the great American writer, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, come to mind (around the many, many billowing a few miles apart on 4,000 from California by a Filipino correspondent who has covered Pacquiao's big bouts in the United States.

• • •

It's trite, it has become almost a cliche, said the correspondent, how Pacquiao trains incredibly hard for yet another fight.

This was the one last year, the year before last, and much, much earlier.

Pacquiao doesn't mind killing himself in preparing for a fight.

Of course, there were times when he would check in late for training in California.

There were times when he would cruise, like last year when he failed to come remotely under the weight in his fight against Marco Antonio Barrera.

• • •

This year, however, there's no denying Pacquiao has been training harder than he's ever had to be at his very best.

OK, there were reports on the ever-growing number of people in Pacquiao's apartment, how the place has become a virtual theme park.

But Pacquiao, so says the knowledgeable correspondent, has refused to be distracted.

The correspondent added that Pacquiao has assured him there's no reason to worry about his weight.

So, problem whatsoever, everything is going splendidly, on schedule.

• • •

This is Hell—assuming Dr. Ingerling, fear of excess poundage—has been locked ahead.

Indeed, we've got to believe what Pacquiao has sworn—that he would bounce through the weighing scales this time.

No, he did not claim he has a better training camp than Marquez, who checked into his mountain hideaway in Mexico a full month earlier than Pacquiao did (at the Wild Card Gym) in Las Angeles.

Despite the one-month gap, Marquez cannot be expected to have an edge in physical preparedness—if we are to believe what Pacquiao and his handlers have been claiming.

Add to this the fact that Pacquiao, as shown in his recent outings, has also developed into a two-fisted wonder, a far cry from the one-track southpaw who got peppered bloody and was forced to a draw by Marquez four years ago.

• • •

Pacquiao, at 29, could be in his peak while Marquez at 34 may well, not be too many years away from retirement.

Of course, we also have to take note of what Marquez has claimed that, at 34, he now feels as young and as strong as he was when he was only 25.

Meanwhile, while fawning Pacquiao are expected to wait on the big fight news.

Still, there remain sharp, seasoned fight fans who have stuck it out with Marquez from the start.

They reason Pacquiao may have indeed found his master when Marquez won three out of four rounds in the second row.

But, at the same time, there are crucial minutes he has not managed to connect and may not be able to subdue until March 15.

These fans, these same experts are not, are not to be dismissive here.

Pacquiao, they are maintaining, does would inevitably have Marquez feeling the role of a raging bull against Mosquez, a master matador.

The bull, as his assigned role, must charge, counter and gore early in order to reverse the time-honored tradition in the usually uneven contest.

BARE EYE

Alexander Trinidad

SPORTSWATCH

Rapid chessfest in Batangas

A CASH PURSE OF P27,000 PLUS TROphies and medals are up for grabs in the Rapid Chess Festival which unfolds on March 16 at the Event Center of SM City Batangas.

The Swiss system, non-master tournament is sponsored by the Arts, Social Good Samaritan Foundation, Inc. in cooperation with Mitsubishi Foundation Inc.

QC dads laud Benedictine 5

THE GREATER CITY GOVERNMENT HEADed by Mayor Sonny Belmonte, yesterday lauded Benedictine International School for topping the 62nd National Inter-Secondary Basketball Championship in Cebu City last March 2.

In a resolution introduced by majority floor leader Jesse Mercado and unanimously approved by the city council, the city government congratulated BIS for its success.

Benedictine defeated Filipino Christian College-Dagupan de Oro, 83-75, in the title tussle of the Cebu Coliseum.

The team is made up of skipper Clark "Tata" Bautista, the tournament MVP; Leandro Baguioro, Jeff Jandiosan, Raymark Cabrera, Leo Augusto, Jomar Tarayao, Bobby Arriesgo, Erin Faner, Chester Cayanan and Justine and Elan Nhoy.

Fatiman derby today in Pasay

A CASH PRIZE OF P1.5 MILLION IS AT stake in the Fatiman MMA/4-Cock Derby today at the Pasay City Cockpit with Sagupaan Champions 2000 Inc. sponsors.

The derby, featuring the country's finest cockers, is now in its biggest drawn each year, according to pit manager Lito dela Rosa and butcher Bano.

Head Pedro Rigor, owner of the famous derby, expects top guns from cockers groups like NCA, CCAP, PCAP, Pinoy Cock ers, LMM, among others, to compete.

The 2-cock elimination round will also be held on Friday. The finals is on Sunday.

BY TOP CHOICE

World No. 3 joins hackers before flying home to 'do the laundry'

By Musong R. Carrillo

IT WAS NOT A USUAL SIGHT FOR fourteen Petrotown Players who darting golf balls left and right with all sorts of swing-hacking swings.

Not you can tell that the world No. 3-ranked her very head-bag in the Philippines.

PETTERSEN is all business during the HSBC tournament.

"It'll be to come back again, hopefully during the holidays because I heard you have a lot of great beaches out here," Petterson told an appreciative crowd during lunch yesterday, just a few minutes after greeting the HSBC Gold Day at Wack Wack. ("Funny name, Wack Wack, isn't it?").

Petterson was brought over by HSBC to add glitter in an exclusive tournament among the bank's clients, executives and media friends.

The LPGA star had just come from the HSBC Tournament of Champions in Hong Kong, where she finished 24 shots behind the winner, world No. 1 Lorena Ochoa.

The Norwegian bombshell joined a hacksession at the West Course's third hole, a 110-yard par 3 where she hit a tee shot with every group that passed by and gave Dale pointers on how to swing a golf club right.

More

TIME OUT. Petterson takes the time out to enjoy a few laughs.

After nine winners on Tour last year, Petterson, nicknamed "Rena," took time out from her busy schedule to visit the country before flying back to her hometown to "sleep on my own bed, cook my own food and do my own laundry."

"I've been on Tour for the past four weeks now and I could definitely use the break," she said. "I only get to go home about four times a year, and then it's nothing but countryside golf after that.

"But don't get me wrong, I love what I am doing."

Petterson, whose biggest career win was the WCI world LPGA Championship, one of the Tour's four majors, has amassed about $2.75 million in earnings in just seven seasons, good for 35th on the all-time list.

HSBC sponsored the unique mixer to "introduce our top spenders and their executives to golf might just prompt executives to hold a professional tournament sometime in the very near future."

But until then, Petterson enjoyed her stay through the wild shots she saw, a much needed break from the cache-like energy she'll have to resume with when she gets back on Tour.

PSC chief not worried over cycling row

By Jose Navarro

THE PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISSION doesn't seem worried about the conflict plaguing the continental cycling scene.

PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez yesterday said there was nothing wrong with the purchase of cycling equipment for the Southeast Asian Games, contrary to the charge several riders brought before the Ombudsman.

"As far as the PSC is concerned, the purchase of the equipment was above board," said Ramirez.

Led by Southeast Asian Games gold medalists Alfie Catalan and Marlon Bebe, 12 RP riders accused officials and coaching staff of the Philippine Cycling Federation for allegedly shortchanging them with overpriced and inferior equipment.

The PSC issued a statement that it would temporarily cut off financial assistance to the association until the controversy is settled.

Ramirez said the rift between the riders and the officials is an internal affair which the PSC doesn't want to dip its hands into as much as possible.

Ty, gymnastics coach, 51

SORRY TY LOSE-TIME NATIONAL GYMNASTICS coach, passed away Saturday evening after suffering a brief illness in his gym in Montalupa, the Gymnastics Association of the Philippines said yesterday.

He was 51.

"Our sympathy goes to the family with this tragic loss," said gymnastics president Chuck Evangelista of the second tragedy that struck the sport in less months.

Last Feb. 8, secretary general Dulce Ingalsby died in a vehicular accident in Makati just before the Philippine gymnastics team was about to compete in the Thailand Southeast Asian Games.

Ty, virtually unknown in the national team middle of last year after a spat with the sport's officials, prompting top men's athlete Joel Ramos to also quit the team.

"We acknowledge the contributions he has made in the sport," added Evangelista.

Ty's remains will be cremated today at the Manila Memorial Park in Sucat, Parañaque.

Jazz hold off Mavericks

Paul powers Hornets; Cassell set to join Celtics

SALT LAKE CITY—POINT GUARD Greven Williams tied a season-high with 20 assists as the Utah Jazz beat the Dallas Mavericks, 114-110, in a key Western Conference matchup on Monday.

"It was a great game, another game that felt like a playoff atmosphere," said Williams, who added 17 points. "Any time you play a Western Conference opponent, everybody right knows is fighting for their lives and fighting for a playoff spot."

After watching the Mavericks score a 20-point deficit, the Jazz rode a 16-0 fourth quarter run to rally back for the victory, their 36th straight at home this city of a team record.

Two nights after dishing out 19 assists in a road win over Memphis, Williams outdid himself, making Dallas' newly acquired star Jason Kidd look like a rookie in the process.

Of course, it didn't hurt that Williams' teammates weren't running. Jazz All-Stars Carlos Boozer and Mehmet Okur were scoreless before 11:43 of the first half since they combined for a 25-8 lead over the first six minutes of the game.

However, another former All-Star was taken out of the equation early on. Jazz forward Andrei Kirilenko

KIRILENKO
Rebounds(R)
11 a.m.—Plastic face or helmet
Tellblurs
(name at 6:00 p.m.)

one of the few players who averages a double-figures in scoring left the floor just five minutes into the first quarter with a right hip injury after being taken down as a flagrant foul by Mavericks forward Dirk Nowitzki.

Kirilenko laid on the ground for several minutes before finally getting up, knocking down a pair of free throws and then getting escorted to the locker room. Initial X-rays were inconclusive, but he was taken to the hospital during the game for further observation.

From then on, Nowitzki, the league's reigning MVP, was loudly booed every time he touched the ball.

In New York, Chris Mead scored 27 points and had a hand in three clutch baskets in the final minutes, leading the New Orleans Hornets over the New York Knicks, 100-98.

Tyson Chandler added 21 points and 18 rebounds for the Hornets, who made sure the Knicks will suffer their seventh straight losing season. They did it by controlling the final minutes behind Mead, who finished with eight points, five rebounds and three steals.

In Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant scored 39 points, five of his teammates also scored in double figures, and the Philadelphia avoided a letdown after its upset win at Phoenix by crushing the Clippers, 106-80.

Atonad Dalembert had 22 points and 12 rebounds, helping Philadelphia win for the 10th time in 12 games.

Cassell update

Meanwhile, two-time NBA champion Sam Cassell is set to sign with the first place Boston Celtics, the Boston Globe reported on Monday.

The veteran guard could travel to Boston Tuesday for the official announcement, said his agent David Falk. He was put on waivers last week by the Los Angeles Clippers.

"He had some personal business he had to attend to in Baltimore. There was a death in the family," Falk said. "But he still be on his way up there and everything is done. He is really excited."

Cassell, 36, had been petitioning the lowly Clippers for a trade or a contract buyout in recent weeks, news that would allow him to join a championship contender.

"He's a proven player," Celtics coach Dan Peters said. "He's coming in with the right frame of mind and he just wants to help. He knows how to play. He's terrific at the end of games."

Cassell won two championship rings with the Houston Rockets in 1994 and 1995. AFP/AP Reuters

DOWN. Mavericks's Dirk Nowitzki (left) of the Dallas Mavericks fouls Andrei Kirilenko hard, injuring the Utah Jazz forward.

PBA official who contradicted Yap suspension resigns

By Musong R. Carrillo

RATHER THAN ACCEPT A POSITION in the Operations Department of the Philippine Basketball Association, technical chief can Jaime "Jerry" Manatad yesterday resigned from the league, the inquirer learned last night.

Manatad, who gave a contradicting opinion on the suspension of Purefoods guard Jerwin Yap in Game 3 of the recent Semi- PBA Philippine Cup title series, refused to be "kicked downstairs" by commissioner Jimmy Barrios and has opted to "retire."

This was confirmed by a very reliable source who requested anonymity. Manatad, reportedly as part instructions of the league, will formalize his resignation with an official statement today.

Martinez, who served the PBA for more than six years, got into a spat with Sta. Lucia team manager Bobby Resurreccion after Game 3 during a review of the game tape.

Yap was suspended for one game after his Pingtexx 1 foul was upgraded to Flagrant 2 after the review. The Purefoods superstar was also slapped a P20,000 fine for the flare violent encounter out of his scorer.

Sta. Lucia, which eventually won the championship with a 100-99 Game 7 victory on Sunday, were on to win their game, 88-76, to take a 3-2 lead.

The source quoted Martinez as saying that he "would be ineffective" in the operations department after "having spent majority of my career as a maker (referee) who also implements the rules."

This development comes in the heels of a reported rift between Martinez and Barrios, which was denied by several members of the Commissioner's Office the day the former technical chief reportedly told Barrios that Yap's violation could be upgraded and was Sunday's Best because of a rule drafted by former commissioner Noli Eala, Barrios said that Yap "could not be suspended."

Barrios had based his decision on an old rule penned by the late commissioner Marianito Simbo in the 1990s, a rule that should have been superseded by the Eala draft.

"We will live and die with the rulebook of our referees or judgment calls," the source quoted Martinez as saying after the Game 3 review.

Martinez, the source said, pointed out that the decision of Barrios could set a very bad precedent since teams could question intelligent calls against them just now tapped each one and hope for a reversal of the result.

Martinez then went on leave the following day, citing "health reasons."

Purefoods board representative Ernie Fonte, in a move viewed as retaliated to the suspension, had resigned as owner-representative of the Purefoods team in a board meeting was held a few days after which specifically focused the Barrios "flip issue."

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KELLY WILLIAMS - Best Player of the Conference — 21 - Forward

NELBERT OMOLON — 3 - Forward	PAOLO MENDOZA — 8 - Guard	PHILIP BUTEL — 9 - Center	RYAN REYES — 10 - Guard	MARLOU AQUINO — 11 - Center	DENNIS DAA — 14 - Forward
JOSEPH YEO — 18 - Guard	MELVIN MAMACLAY — 19 - Guard	RONNIE BUCHAO — 23 - Guard	NORMAN GONZALES — 28 - Forward	DENNIS MIRANDA — 32 - Guard	CHRISTIAN CORONEL — 69 - Guard

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PLDT beats forecasts, nets ₱36B in 2007

Execs say growth to slow down to 5% this year

By Nas T. Chibanishe

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE Telephone Co. (PLDT) beat market forecasts on net earnings and core net earnings for 2007, but said growth may be slower for 2008.

Company officials said in a briefing yesterday that PLDT's unaudited consolidated net profit grew 2 percent to P36 billion from P35.1 billion in 2006.

PLDT said the results benefited from higher foreign exchange gains and lower additional depreciation charges, offset by increased provision for voluntary separation and higher asset impairment charges.

Core net income, net of these exceptional items, was 11 percent higher at P35.2 billion from P31.6 billion in 2006.

Before 2007 ended, PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan said the company was poised to top its 2006 reported income of P35.1 billion and core net income of P31.5 billion.

In mid-2007, PLDT upgraded its earn

PLDT B6

IN THIS ISSUE

■ **Aboitiz Transport profit** jumps 133% to P420M /B4
■ **San Miguel beer unit** reports PBB in profit /B5

BSP: Strong peso beneficial to economy

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE SHARP APPRECIATION OF THE PESO against the dollar is doing the country more good than harm because it not only helps reduce inflation and government expenditures but also directly perks up domestic productivity, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported to Congress yesterday.

In a presentation before the House committee on economic affairs, BSP officer in-charge Diwa Guinigundo showed central bank simulations which showed that every 1% percent peso appreciation would boost growth in gross domestic product by at least 0.6 percentage point while trimming the inflation rate by at least 0.3 percentage point.

Based on the BSP simulations, every 5-percent rise in the peso value against the greenback has a positive effect of 0.2 percentage point on the GDP and a dampening effect on inflation of about 0.1 percentage point, taking into account only the "first-round" effects, including the multiplier effects. Guinigundo said the overall benefits would even be greater.

For this year, Guinigundo also estimated that every peso appreciation against the dollar would result in a P2.7 billion reduction in government revenues (largely due to lower customs collections), but the said data would be offset by a decline of P4.1 billion in expenditures due to lower cost of

BSP B2

Stocks inch up

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.8 PERCENT higher yesterday, with bargain hunters stepping in as the market focused on corporate results, dealers said.

The composite index gained 33.13 points to 4,106.12. It moved between 3,978.99 and 4,113.21. The broader all-share index rose 6.12 points to 1,905.97.

There were 107 advancers and 53 decliners, while 68 stocks ended flat. A total of 1.33 billion shares worth P1.4 billion were traded. Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) rebounded after tumbling 3.5 percent on Monday.

Shortly after the market closed, PLDT reported that its 2007 core net profit topped its guidance, with growth still underpinned by the performance of its wireless business.

Despite the market's advance, investors continued to worry about a weakening US economy.

"Today's gains were more of a technical rebound. There was very limited participation as investors are still watching the overseas markets and the latest US economic indicators were another reason for people to be cautious," said Dolorato Bala of Citibank online.

Sun Hipo "K" was steady at P21. Its "B" shares gained 50 centavos at P53. Ayala

BSP's dollar stock outside GIR hits record $13B

Monetary authority posts gain from mopping up excess cash

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS has built up a record $13 billion stock of foreign exchange outside its official foreign reserves as of end-January, up by $2.3 billion from the end-December level, according to official central bank data.

The $13 billion refers to foreign exchange bought up in foreign currency swaps that investors have booked as part of the country's gross international reserves (GIR).

As of end-January, the GIR likewise reached an all-time high of $34 billion.

Over the last two years, the BSP has been using swaps to mop up excess foreign exchange purchased from the Philippine Dealing System.

The currency swaps refer to the dollars bought by the BSP from the open market and redeployed for peso. This action effectively removes excess foreign exchange liquidity that will otherwise push up inflation.

Inflation rises when more money finds its way into people's pockets, thereby encouraging consumer spending.

In conducting swaps, the BSP engages in the simultaneous purchase and sale of currencies with a specific maturity date. The parties exchange interest payments within the specified period. Upon maturity, the currencies are returned at a previously agreed rate so that the parties end up with their original currencies.

The BSP's outstanding swaps indicate how much more in GIR could rise if the current bank woes to unwind such contracts.

The GIR is a key indicator of a country's ability to cover its foreign exchange requirements. It is made up of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, foreign investments and special drawing rights from multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund.

The BSP has been able to purchase more dollars from the open foreign exchange market due to sustained remittances from overseas Filipinos, as well as from foreign portfolio investments in local stocks and bonds.

TOKYO: Ursula Zurb, head of Motors general manager for human resources, and Isuzu Philippines president Koji Takeda (right) unveil the scale model of the automotive training facility in Tarlac, Luzon.

Giving a break to the poor and deserving

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

EMPLOYEES OF ISUZU (JAPAN) of Japan were asked last year what they wanted the company to do to give back to the communities that enabled it to reach 75 years and become one of the world's leading vehicle manufacturers.

The overwhelming response was to put considerable resources behind improving the quality of education, especially among the underprivileged youth.

In a survey conducted last year, Isuzu employees said that they believe equipping the youth with knowledge they can actually use is important in ensuring a bright future not just for the communities, but Isuzu as well.

The common expression of that support in the Philippines is the training center in Tarlac, Luzon which will be developed to produce top class automotive technicians badly needed by the growing automotive sector in the Philippines.

Isuzu Motors Ltd. of Japan, through the global firms Utsan and Isuda Project, will provide $1 million to put up the training center and finance the living and education expenses of as many as 240 scholars over the next five years.

The training center will be operated mainly by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, the government agency tasked to manage and oversee all the development in the Philippines. Isuzu Motors Ltd. and Isuzu Philippines Corp. will also provide vital technical support, including input in the development of the academic curriculum and supply of training equipment.

The ambitious goal is to make the center, and the Philippines, a major source of world-class automobile technicians.

Commenting on the scholarship project is Plan Philippines, a nongovernment organization geared toward the development of the youth, it will ultimately be 80 years but deserving men and women from low-income families who will go through the vocational skills training.

The scholars, who will come from the poorest communities, are committed to finish the course and take jobs in the automotive industry.

The project was formally launched last Jan. 31 with the signing of the memorandum of agreement between Plan Philippines and Isuda, which was witnessed by Isuzu and Isuda Japan.

"The project is a testimony to Isuzu's faith in the Filipino people," said Plan Philippines Country Director Michael Diamond. "With this, young people from some of the most depressed provinces in the Philippines are given hope for a better and brighter future. Isuzu and Isuda, as partners of Plan, Isuzu found in this undertaking will ensure that scholars are provided early the best training to become an automotive technician."

CORPORATE CITIZEN

Isuzu Philippines president Koji Takeda said in an interview that the training center would accept its first batch of scholars in June this year and they would complete training in six months. Two batches of 40 scholars would be accepted every year.

The scholars would go through basic modules after which they would be granted a level 4 national certificate. This means that they will be more skilled than most graduates of vocational training and may only qualify for a level 2 certificate from Isuda.

Takeda said that the level 4 certification means that they know all the basics and can work on all kinds of engines and vehicles, which should ensure them of getting a job in an industry in dire need of qualified technicians.

"The local auto industry is currently experiencing a positive growth, especially after selling nearly 116,000 brand new vehicles last year," Takeda said. "With this increase in new vehicle demand, we hope to be able to produce a new generation of competent and world-class automotive technicians to cope with growing market demand for technical expertise.

"We also hope to supply the young beneficiaries of this program in the near future, so they can join us in providing service excellence in our valued customers," he added, while stressing that the graduates are under no obligation to work for Isuzu upon graduation.

In fact, the training center would do its students an extra service by enabling not to automotive firms to make sure that the students' skills will fit what the industry needs and to tap them to become potential employees for the graduates.

Tomoki Umeda, general manager for General Affairs of Isuzu Motors Ltd., expressed confidence that, with many like-minded companies pitching in to make the project a success, the program would be sustained long after the initial $1 million fund runs out.

"I am very sure that the project would be successful because we chose the right partners," Umeda said through an interpreter. "For us, education of the youth is very important."

Interfaith rally: The view from below

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honorato C. Catindig

THE VIEW FROM ABOVE THE interfaith rally at Ayala Avenue in Makati last Friday was really impressive.

The view from below was quite different.

Because my office has long been on Ayala Avenue (except for the past year when I moved to Forbes Street), I have witnessed all, and really, just to assess, demonstrations since People Power I to 1986.

The interfaith rally has truly [illegible] interesting. I decided I would be right in the thick of it. I closed the office at 1 p.m. and sent the staff home. Then the assistance officers in the neighborhood also shut down at the same time.

I called up some of my neighbors in Bel-Air. Those who were [illegible] in joining the interfaith rally.

After killing time at the Makati Sports Club, I stood at the corner of Ayala Avenue and Paseo de Roxas at around 5 p.m. to the past. I wanted my way around the loose fringes of the crowd. Starting to observe the demonstrators and the vendors.

As usual, the crowd on Ayala Avenue at Paseo de Roxas was almost unpenetrable. It was where the stadium and the colorful flags were massed. I made out the red flags of the militant groups—Bayan Muna, Akbayan, Gabriela, Sanlakas, Migrante, Partido ng Manggagawa (here I missed anyone?). Ever since they hijacked People Power I and did not share in the glory of victory, the communists have not missed a rally, big or small.

At the fringes were the entrepreneurs—the so-called "kuhol" crowd. They were the ambulant in rubber sandals. They were selling their wares during the speeches. Their wares [illegible] the numbers that looked so impressive to verbal phrases.

The interpreters were there for the money, at P300 per head. Plus transport and transport. Not a poor family of five, that was a whopping P1800 for just showing up.

I would have wanted to report [illegible] to chat with the interpreters. If she did, she probably would have walked out in tears.

The purposes that brought the interpreters from parts beyond Makati were parked on the side streets. Each jeepney was probably hired at P3000 for the round trip.

I estimated the crowd at 20,000 maximum. At least 16,000 were there for the money and only for the money. The total cost, including jeepney rental, amounted to P5 million maximum. Where did the money come from?

I noticed workers on the sidewalk, but it was a lake. The high-rise buildings were empty. The employees had gone home earlier. The vendors said so. With thousands around, the vending business was done in a small. The interpreters brought their own food and did not buy any of the goodies from the vendors. I bought a bag of chicharon.

The interfaith rally was a disaster, on at least, half a day.

After an hour, I went to the main bar of the Makati Sports Club, to kill a bottle of excellent Cabernet Sauvignon offered by Remy R., my drinking and singing buddy, at 9 p.m., we were home. The crowd was gone. Ayala Avenue was back to normal.

When all is said and done, as long as the employees choose to go home, and the residents in the upscale villages prefer to watch the proceedings on high definition TV and, more importantly, if half of the crowd is headed in for the money, a protest rally on Ayala Avenue, no matter how many banderolas pass, no matter how many speeches are uttered, will come to naught.

No one can take a People Power lifestyle. No one can manufacture Divine Providence. Not even with all the money in the world.

Aurora taps NMLC for Roro plans

By Rita T. Olchondra

IN A MOVE TO OPEN ROLL-ON, ROLL-OFF (Roro) services in the Northeastern Luzon corridor, state-owned NLIC Maritime Leasing Corp. (NMLC) has agreed to provide technical support to the provincial government of Aurora when it talks to missionary ports.

NMLC signed the agreement with the Northeastern Luzon Pacific Coastal Service Inc. (NLPCSI), a corporation formed by the provinces of Northern Quezon provinces of Aurora, Quezon, Isabela and Cagayan to provide Roro transport services.

NLPCSI will kick off operations by putting up a Roro transport system that will initially link the Dingalan Bay-Casiguran missionary route in Aurora. This route will later be extended to ports in Quezon, Isabela and Cagayan.

The Dingalan port, which forms part of the Northeastern Luzon Coastal Service and recently inaugurated by President Macapagal-Arroyo, is now ready to accommodate Roro vessels.

The Northeastern Luzon Corridor will ensure that the linking of these missionary routes will offer viable transportation for 14,000 passengers and 30,000 metric tons of agricultural products for shipment to various destinations.

The provincial government of Aurora, under Gov. Bellaflor Angara-Castillo, said in a statement that the Roro transport system is a key development project offering opportunities not only for Aurora but also for provinces within the Northeastern Luzon Corridor.

NMLC president and CEO Agustin B. Rodriguez, in his letter to Governor Castillo, said the agreement with LGUs "are important and reliable partners in introducing changes and development to underserved communities, and their support is crucial to the success of any local enterprise."

Rodriguez said that the NLPCSI is a good example of an LGU initiative to facilitate growth in underserved communities.

Aurora is being primed as an ecotourism destination in Northeastern Luzon, with huge investment opportunities in transport, recreation, agriculture, utilities, infrastructure, wood export and marine culture.

To address the influx of investors looking for a venue to grow their businesses, the Aurora Special Economic Zone was established in Congress in 2007 by virtue of RA 9490.

Aurora is famous for its waterfalls, unspoiled beaches and its 4-foot high waves and Eastern Sierra in Casiguran Bay, attracting surfers from abroad. Former President Manuel L. Quezon used to maintain a home in Aurora, now a historical landmark.

PLDT beats forecasts, nets P36B in 2007

From page B1

net income target to the range of P34.5 billion-P35 billion from the P32 billion that it had estimated at the beginning of the year.

Despite the bigger income, PLDT used its capital expenditure budget for 2007 was expected to remain at P21 billion, the same as in 2007.

Total dividend payments for 2007 increased by 50 percent to P28.2 billion from P18.6 billion in 2006.

"We are extremely pleased that our record earnings and robust cash flow allowed us to declare both a final dividend of P66 per share as well as a special dividend of P66 per share, bringing total dividends for 2007 to P180 per share, inclusive of the interim dividend of P60 per share paid earlier. This is an unprecedented 100 percent dividend payout compared with the 45 percent payout for 2006," PLDT president Napoleon Nazareno said during the briefing.

Pangilinan and growth in core earnings were expected to be lower at 5 percent this year from 33 percent in 2007 due to the restrictions and slowdown in the US economy, which helps strengthen the peso.

The PLDT group's total cellular subscriber base for the year grew by 5.9 million to 20 million as of end-2007.

Nazareno said the PLDT group sees about the same growth for 2008, with subscribers to reach around 25 million by yearend.

"We had good growth in 2007, but that was an election year. It's hard to say this year," he said.

Nazareno downplayed the effect of political volatility and the text campaign ban that go with it on subscriber growth or even on data revenue growth.

"It would take a considerably huge upheaval to have an effect," he said.

In February 2008, the PLDT group's subscriber base surpassed the 21 million mark as Smart and Piltel added about a million new subscribers in the first two months of the year.

PLDT officials said that subscriber growth would continue especially in the lower segments, but were not as optimistic in 2007.

While not discounting that PLDT's subscriber base could grow in a little over 21 million by end-2008, Nazareno said that broadband and information and communications technology services (which covers subscriptions into SPI and Wireless) were expected to enjoy more growth.

Wireless broadband revenues grew 190 percent in about P2.4 billion in 2007 from P825 million in 2006.

HUNTER Kent, president, COO and CSO chief of The Coca-Cola Co., chokes back with local market executive partner Joel Maluenda of San Andres, Manila, during Kent's recent visit to the country

PSALM assumes P6.14B in electric cooperatives' debts

Promote rural electrification efforts, bring down power rates

By Abigail L. Pio

POWER SECTOR ASSETS and Liabilities Management Corp. has paid P6.14 billion worth of electric cooperatives' obligations to the National Electrification Administration and other government agencies.

According to the Department of Energy's status report on the implementation of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epira), which covered November 2006 to May 2007, the amount represented 24 percent of all the debts that needed to be condoned to advance the government's rural electrification efforts.

Under the Epira, PSALM should assume all rural electrification-related outstanding obligations of the country's 119 electric cooperatives.

The loan condonation is also supported to help reduce power rates in rural communities.

Of the 900 amount, almost P10 billion was to the NEA and about P95.21 million had to be paid to other government agencies and local government units.

As of end-March last year, P606.80 had absorbed P6.27 billion in loans to NEA and P56.57 million in loans to other government entities.

Of the total payments made to NEA, 75 percent – or about P6.36 billion – was used to pay the rural electrification loans assumed by electric cooperatives.

Another 15.06 percent was for loans related to mini-hydro projects and 9.2 percent to debt-to-thermal facilities.

Around P4.39 million went to the payment of house wiring conversion loans.

On March 9, 2007, the PSALM Loans Condonation Committee met with the NEA, the Department of Energy and Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives to finalize the revisions to be taken by PSALM and NEA to effect EO 468, series of 2005," the Epira status report said.

Under EO 468, PSALM's assumption of the electric cooperatives' rural electrification loans will be retroactive from the effectivity of the Epira.

NEA will then refund to the concerned electric cooperatives the collections made from June 26, 2001 until the issuance of the provisional authority for rate reduction by the Energy Regulatory Commission.

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Globe names head of enterprise group

RUBBING THE LOSS MOment to wireless and wireline services, Globe Telecom Inc. belatedly placed Vanessa Constantino into president and CEO-GE focus in charge of the company's enterprise business group.

"Due to an internal organization effective March 3, 2008, Mr. B. Gonlo will assume the position of head business customer facing and Chairman CFO for Globe Telecom Inc.," the company said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

The business group handles the voice and data connectivity needs of Globe's enterprise clients. CFOs are frontliners in cultivating sales with enterprises.

Globe spokesperson Jones Campos said the change did not affect the consumer business group headed by Ferdinand de la Cruz.

"It is more a reflection of technology consolidation, since customers who initially got wireless services (invariably) ask about wireline services as well, and vice versa," he said.

Symbolized by a new logo, called "Globe Life," Globe is blurring the lines between its wireless and wireline units. "In a business solutions, wireless, landline, broadband and convergence, we work as one unit, moving together to give you what you deserve," it said in a recent news release about its new logo.

In 2002, Globe integrated its wireless network with that of Isla Communications Co. Inc. (Islacom), consummating an agreement made by the two companies and their principals in 2000. – Jose T. Olchondra

Jpepa seen boosting RP economic growth

THE RATIFICATION OF THE Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (Jpepa) is expected to boost the country's gross domestic product (GDP) with some P54.3 billion worth of gains to be generated by the agreement, said a banker and a premier leader.

In 2007, GDP grew by 7.3 percent, the highest growth rate in 31 years.

Herminio Ocampo, president of First Isabela Cooperative Bank, and Leo Rafael, chair of the legal and policy group of peasant organization Anakpawis, said in a statement that the Jpepa ratification would result in growth in exports and increase in productivity. There, they said, "will be major layers to the economic pie of the country."

The said P54.3 billion in gains from Jpepa was an estimate of a government body led by the Department of Trade and Industry.

A Jpepa briefing paper prepared by the government showed that overseas loans under a trading regime of scaled-down tariffs would be managed from a surge in the value of goods that would be traded under such an environment.

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Aboitiz Transport profit jumps 133% to ₱420M

By Roland Domingo

ABOITIZ TRANSPORT SYSTEMS Corp. yesterday announced it posted a net income of P420 million last year, up 133 percent from P197 million in 2006.

ATS registered consolidated revenues of P11.1 billion in 2007, increasing by 4.7 percent from P10.6 billion in 2006.

ATS' earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization or (Ebitda) stood at P994.2 million.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, ATS corporate information officer Lilian D Cariaso said the firm operated last year at reduced capacity because it sold some vessels and majority of its fleet was on the dry dock.

She said that this year, ATS expected to existing fleet of 17 vessels to be in full operations with minimal dry-docking.

Cariaso said that while capacity was reduced in 2007, freight revenues increased 8 percent to P7 billion owing to higher revenues from its international chartering business.

ATS has also been converting inland passage capacity to make room for increasing freight demand, especially for its roll-on roll-off service.

ATS said savings from supply chain management services reached P1.00 billion or 121 percent higher year-on-year.

ATS earned P622.7 million from the sale of three vessels, the proceeds of which were to be used to pay part of its P1.4 billion in debt.

As of end-2007, ATS stockholders' equity decreased 6 percent to P4.3 billion after the company declared a cash dividend of 30 centavos a share to both common and preferred shareholders.

For this year, Cariaso said ATS was focused on further increasing its freight business and enhancing the running capacity of its assets.

After 100 years since starting in the transport business in 1907, ATS has evolved into a provider of total logistics and supply chain solutions.

Pldt profit down 17.7% in '07

PLDT

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE Corp. announced a 17.7 percent decline in its net income for 2007 to P8.2 billion from P10.00 billion in 2006.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Pldt said the drop was due to higher provision for income tax last year and the additional depreciation of P926 million relating to Pldt's fixed line assets.

Pldt's total revenues in 2007 grew 21 percent to P135.31 billion from P12.59 billion in 2006 because of the consolidated growth in revenues contribution from the Talk 'N Text subscriber base.

Pldt is the Philippines' first biggest cellular operator with Talk 'N Text having 27.5 million net subscriber additions to 2007 to end the year with 37.7 million subscribers.

Roland Domingo

San Miguel beer unit reports P8B in profit

Alliance Tuna buys 70% stake in Indonesian firm

ALLIANCE TUNA INTERNATIONAL NO. ventur said its board had approved the company's acquisition of a 70 percent stake PT Kendeba Sakti, a tuna cannery operating in Bitung, Indonesia.

In a statement, company information officer Rajat Bahuti said the deal was worth $721,000 or about P36.6 million.

Alliance Tuna would set up a new company the remaining 30 percent stake in which would be owned by a group led by Indonesian firm CV Maslan Persema.

Bahuti said Alliance Tuna planned to spend this year an additional $900,000 or about P35.7 million for the modernization of the existing plant.

"The company expects to complete the deal in 90 days and start operations in the first 2008," Bahuti said.

He said the planned upgrade would bring the cannery's capacity to 60 metric tons daily on top of the capacity to process 20 MT daily of frozen tuna loins and other marine products.

"Not only will the investment give [Alliance Tuna] access to the more lucrative tuna loining products in the area but will also complement its marketing and manufacturing efforts thus enabling future growth and profitability," Bahuti said.

Engaged in tuna processing, canning, and export of canned tuna products, the General Santos City-based company averaged commercial operations in 2004. — Reported By: Bonnings

Company plans to hold IPO in first half of 2008

By Ramon W. Dominguez

SAN MIGUEL CORP. YESTERday said its beer subsidiary, San Miguel Brewery Inc., posted a net income of P8.02 billion in 2007.

The San Miguel beer unit is expected to push through with its initial public offering plan this year despite a weak market.

In a statement, San Miguel said its recently spun off unit recorded a 9.4-percent increase in net income last year, coming from P7.34 billion in 2006.

It added that based on SMBI's financial statements, net sales in 2007 increased by 8.6 percent to P44.14 billion as volume grew by about 8 percent.

These data are contained in a revised 17-(b)-1(g) Circular filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Philippine Stock Exchange in preparation for SMB. SB's IPO.

Last week, SMC president Ramon Ang told reporters the company would proceed with plans to list SMB on the PSE within the first half of the year despite weak market conditions.

SMBC hopes to raise as much as P23.2 billion through the offering to the public of 1.55 billion shares at between P9.50 and P16.50 per share.

SMB's listing forms part of San Miguel's broader plan to list all of its operating units on the local bourse.

"We are listing beer and packaging businesses. We are also considering all the food (businesses) as they can be listed," he said.

"All operating companies will eventually be listed in that the management of these firms will be more transparent."

Already, three of these SMC subsidiaries listed on the PSE, such as alcohol and alcoholic beverages firm Ginebra San Miguel Inc., food manufacturer San Miguel Purefoods Co. Inc. and real estate developer San Miguel Properties Inc.

Ang said that after the beer unit, the next one he listing would be SMC's packaging operations to complete a list of five listed subsidiaries.

This is on top of other companies that will hold the company's expected investments in power generation and mining.

Ang also hinted at the possibility of San Miguel, the parent firm, eventually being delisted once all its units were already being publicly traded.

PNOC-EDC to bid for Tiwi-Makban plants

Abigail L. Ho

THE LOPEZ-LED PNOC ENERGY Development Corp. has expressed its interest to participate in the bidding for the 747.5-megawatt (MW) Tiwi-Makban geothermal facilities in Albay, Laguna and Batangas.

According to Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp.'s 2008 privatization timetable, the geothermal facilities package will be offered on the auction block on June 6.

Interested bidders have until March 12 to submit letters of interest for the two geothermal plants.

The auction covers both power-generating assets, which will be sold on an "as is, where is" basis. It likewise involves the resources and improvements, spare parts and general plant equipment of the two facilities.

The sale will also include the steam-field facilities as well as the geothermal resources under contract between PHAM and Philippine Geothermal Inc.—now Chevron Geothermal Philippines Holdings Inc.—the steam supplier for the 289-MW Tiwi and 458.5-MW Makban plants.

A power supply allocation would be offered to the Tiwi-Makban plant package, PNOC-EDC said.

Prior to the issuance of the bidding package to interested investors, PNOC-EDC and interested bidders would have to execute a confidentiality agreement and undertaking with PNOC-EDC as well as remit a participation fee of $2,000 by March 14.

BSP: Strong peso ...

From page B-1

foreign debt servicing.

"This will thus result in a P1.4 billion decline in the government in the [government budget] deficit primarily because of the higher impact of a higher exchange rate on the [international] dollar than revenues. The government stands to gain by way of interest savings," he said.

The reason why a stronger exchange rate packs up revenues is growth, Guinigundo said, was that the peso value and exports, a major economic driver, have no correlation based on the country's historical revenues, it cites.

"Exports continue to increase even during the time that the peso started appreciating sometime in 2005 and 2006," Guinigundo said.

What, our importers are deriving benefits from an exchange rate appreciation, especially as electronic manufacturers are relying on imported inputs," he said.

On the issue of overseas Filipino workers, Guinigundo noted a continued rise in OFW remittances despite the depreciation of the peso in early 2004 to 2004 and even during its appreciation between 2005 and 2006.

Editor Aries Espinosa

Baiphil celebrates training, development week

THE BANKERS INSTITUTE OF THE Philippines (Baiphil) will celebrate its first ever Baiphil Training and Development Week from March 10 to 15 pursuant to Presidential Proclamation No. 1248 declaring the second week of March of every year as such. The Baiphil Board led by Filipinas (BSP) has also issued Circular Letter No. 2008-009 enjoining all banks to support Baiphil's program of activities during the said week.

Baiphil president Ma. Helena G. Tinsay, BSP Assistant Governor, announced a complete program of activities during the week-long celebration. These activities are geared towards celebrating Baiphil's continuous adherence to its mission of providing support to banks towards productivity enhancement through networks, information exchange and education as well as in engaging in activities promoting corporate social responsibility.

The week will open with a Thanksgiving Mass and General Membership Meeting on March 10 at Hotel Intercon. During the special dinner meeting, Teodoro Sy-Coson, vice chair of SM Investments Corp. and chair of BDO Universal Bank, will speak on "Good Corporate Governance is a Mindset." And on March 11 is a full day exercise in Baiphil's history the inauguration of the Baiphil Training Institute at the TBS Towers, Ilaya Boulevard, Pasay City. This will house the permanent venue for the various seminars and trainings being conducted by Baiphil. To further highlight Baiphil's significant role in training, it will conduct three seminars during the week, namely: "The Role of Telcos in Electronic Banking" (March 12), "Real Property Database System" (March 13) and "Credit Risk Management" (March 15). As part of its corporate social responsibility, Baiphil will conduct an outreach project-medical mission in Barrio Ano, Bayambang, Pangasinan on March 14 and 15 in cooperation with the Alumni of Bayambang National High School and PSU Laboratory School led by Dr. Nicolas O. Hilgard, Chief of Hospital, Bayambang District Hospital. Baiphil will also provide assistance in the information campaign of the project "Sagipin Ang Angat" of the Bangkal ng Buhay Foundation for its seven-day Angat Buhay program of advocacy to help preserve and protect the environment.

Coordinating the program of activities during this week is director in-charge of Baiphil Rhoda Serafino de la Paz-Singco, DBP senior vice president, and Baiphil Rank committee chair Celia M. Torres, RCBC vice president. Assisting are committee members Secretary Ruth Tiu Pillevelle S. Tolentino, BDO FVP Lydia C. King, GE Money Bank FVP Salvador S. Serrano, DBP AVP Corazon D. Conde, UBP SVP Yolanda Velasco, BDO Private Bank SVP Ignacio B. Jacinto, Metrobank SVP Jesus D. Cruz, Metrobank SVP Leo L. Blanco, Chinabank SVP Estefania A. Justice, RCBC FVP Susan A. Dizon, Citibank FVP Marlcho Jimenez, and PSTC Director Evangeline S. Sevaco.

UNILAB NUTRITION CAMPAIGN IN CALUMPIT

Unilab, the largest and foremost local pharmaceutical company, recently conducted a nutrition campaign partnership with CEO Foundation in Calumpit, Bulacan, conducted to consumer health choices supported schooling program by effective and energy with stable condominiums and maintained a remedial mission through the local mothers' association and barangay nutrition scholars. The pharmaceutical unit of the campaign to improve the weight-count level of pre-school children in the province. Shown during the graduation rites for the feeding beneficiaries are (from left) Lingkod Lingap sa Bayan representative Yolanda Pacarang, DSWD outpatient beneficiary-coordinator Elvie Cleofas, local volunteer Loreta Ug-Unilab corporate affairs officer Raymond Santiago, Bulacan Governor Josefa Jocson, Jaypee Mendoza, Calumpit Mayor Ireneo de Jesus, and the children from Barangay Balucan, Calumpit.

MOST DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

Shown are the Sri Aurobindo of Eastern Asian Institute given by the University of Santo Tomas Graduate School in cooperation with the University of Santo Tomas Graduate School Alumni Association, with the theme 'Enhancing Pharmacist Potential Towards 2015' based on contributions, competencies and compassion. Seated (from left, are Ricardo Sy-Pacia, Dr. Ramon Nicanor A. Roque OSB I, Dr. Lucio C. Tan, Lt. Col. Miguel I. Picazo III, Enrico L. Torres. Standing, from left, are Dr. Flaviano C. Penaredo and Dr. Rodolfo P. Severino. The recognition and awarding ceremonies were given at the Bahay Pilipinas Function Hall of a formal dinner recently.

MWTC PAYS ITS REAL PROPERTY TAX IN ADVANCE

The Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC), holder-concessionaire of the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX), paid in advance its real property tax for 2008 in what was viewed as a swift reaction of its management after the controversial tax case that MNTC chair Oscar M. Lopez (2nd from right) and MNTC president Jose Ping de Jesus (right) lost over a fraudulent check amounting to P1,206,760 in favor of provincial LGU officials led by Senior Professional Engineer, representing Bulacan Provincial Assessor, and (from left) Rosal Ramirez, city assessor; Rafael Bautista, city treasurer; Lawyer Edmund Mangio, chief; Susanna Pineda; and LGU Zoning Office. The check handover followed the recent formal inauguration of the MNTC corporate office buildings in Balintawak, Caloocan City.

US immigration seminar in Baguio City

ITAMPLO AND ITAMPLO IMMIGRATION CONSULTANTS will be conducting a seminar in Baguio on March 8, 2 p.m. in Session 2 of the Pines Hall, Baguio Country Club Management (BCM) Conference Center, Igorot Club, Baguio City. Shirlead Itamplo, Esq., the firm's co-founder, will lead the seminar and present a comprehensive overview of US immigration rules and regulations. The seminar will cover substantive and procedural requirements and qualifications for immigrant and non-immigrant visa applications. Itamplo is a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, New York State Bar Association, New York State Trial Lawyers Association and New York County Lawyers Association. For registration and seminar fees, call 900-5864 or 725-2885, text 0916-6280880 or log on to www.itamplolaw.com.

UE digital library management seminar

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE EAST LIBRARY SCIENCE ALUMNI Association Inc. (UELASAI) will hold a one-day seminar on "Collection Management in the Digital Age" March 7 at the UE International Research Center, 2nd Floor, UE College of Education Building, UE Dilimán, QC from 8 a.m. onwards, with Dr. Juan C. Dizon-Professor in Information Studies, Subang University (SU)-cited librarian, leading as the BLIS Head of Graduate Studies, UE Graduate School and as the UE Manila College of Arts and Sciences. The seminar aims to make participants understand the collection management paradigm shift in the digital age, and to equip them with practical skills in the distribution process. For inquiries, call Elisa C. Cabrilas, 735-5471 loc 402; Sara M. Ordanza, 8921-4470001; Ma. Rosalie Rosalejos, 735-5471 loc. 418; Celia Diaz, 921-1729.

SAGE Philippines 2008 now accepting entries

THE PHILIPPINE YOUTH ENTERprenurship Network, in cooperation with the Junior Jaycees of Las Piñas, is now accepting entries from high schools all over the country for its business competition, the Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship (SAGE) Quest.

SAGE is a business competition that partners secondary level students with mentors from universities, colleges and business or civic leaders. The international program provides an outstanding venue for high school students, college students and business leaders to interact through entrepreneurship education and community service projects.

To participate in the SAGE Philippines Cup 2008, a team of three to five students representing their high school must come up with a social enterprise that focuses on profit with a social mission. The competition will be held in the University of the Philippines, Los Baños on June 21. The winning team will represent the Philippines at the 6th annual Sabal World Cup in Abuja, Nigeria from July 21 to 28.

Last year's winners from the Aurora High School competed at the SIFE World Cup in Odessa, Ukraine in August 2007. They garnered the International Award for Social Enterprise with their essay recycling tarpaulin posters widely used to line your's electrons torn bags while providing jobs to a coalition of displaced vendors in Antipolo. The team's success was featured on "Mel & Joey", Entrepreneur Magazine, and the Manila Times in Singapore.

For more competition, applicants must express their interest to join by calling Ayma D. Capilla at 0906-3234553 or e-mail to ayma_capma@yahoo.com, or Pamela P. Leonard at 0927-5376180 or pipleonard@yahoo.com by March 20. For more information about SAGE, log on to www.sagaglobal.org.

Ultimate desktop companion

IF YOUR WORK IS mainly a significant amount of your time tapping away in front of a desktop computer or lap-top, then a solution to make your vocation more entertaining is in the offing.

The minimalist design runs and superb audio of the Bose Companion 5 and 3 might just be the solution to multimedia requirements. Designed for convenience and ease of use, just connect the system to your computer's USB port and voilà, you get an instant desktop theater system. Amazingly, it does not require an extra hard drive, software or set-up gambits. "It was designed to be simple to use and be user friendly. There are no adjustments needed or complicated wiring. Just a simple USB connection provides you a more thrilling and lifelike sound," explains Wilson Su, president of Unitek, exclusive distributors of Bose audio and video products in the country.

Both Companion 3 and 5 multimedia speaker systems come equipped with two desktop speakers and Bose's patented Acoustimass sound. It is the bass and soul of the multimedia system and the Acoustimass is responsible for the special effects and superb lifelike surround sound. Due can actually hear sound effects from those times when there are no

speakers. The sounds seem to emanate around your work area. An advanced control pod puts volume and more functionality at your fingertips, while providing easy connection to an additional audio input, such as a portable MP3 player or headphone jack for private listening.

The Companion 5 and 3 multimedia systems is huge for music, games and movies to work-at an level of acoustic enjoyment. It provides a richer and detailed sound that turns your computer into a cool entertainment center. Aside from the sound, a plus factor of Bose's multimedia speaker systems is the stylish and sleek design, which makes it blend with your surroundings.

To experience the absolute in multimedia technology still thrive at 724-9566/995-2645 or visit Bose showrooms at the 5M Megamall, Power Plant Mall in Rockwell Center, 101 North Eden and The Block, 3rd floor of Glorietta 3, Ayala Center, Makati, and at the 3M Mall of Asia.

NorthPine Land to build Trillium in QC

NORTHPINE LAND INC. FORmerly Justine Land Inc., will build Trillium Mine Triangle, a 48-tower residential condominium for the middle class, in Quezon City.

Trillium will rise from a 1.3-hectare lot in Mine Triangle, near Philam Homes, according to Northpine Land, which changed its name from Justine Land to signal a new beginning and a renewed commitment to property development in the country.

NorthPine is a consortium of Justine's multinational property group Hongkong Land, 40 percent share; and Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. (Metrobank), Banco de Oro (BDO) Universal Bank, and Sun Miguel Properties, each with 20 percent share.

Trillium, rising from a podium, offers a range of two-to-three-bedroom units with area ranging from 83 to 161 sqm.

Aside from the typical project features of space, proximity to key areas, lifestyle and family-oriented amenities, Trillium's land investors are offering alternative luxurious living through the concept of modern Zen for this project. Trillium, The Modern Zen, aims to break new ground in the economy's first minimalist Modern Zen high-rise residential project with its unique connection and Zen garden that relieves the stress of one's hard day's work.

The principles of modern Zen, according to its developer and designers, will be reflected in interior designs that the working class can afford and still fully appreciate, thru creating havens of calm, of refreshing and inconspiring surroundings for relaxation within their own homes where they are treated, regain contact with the natural world and enjoy moments of serenity.

Within the walls of Trillium is a respite from the high-powered goings-on of the modern metropolis: landscaped nooks and intimate gardens, greening and open spaces that complement the mood conducive to activities of function rooms, a swimming pool, parks and playground, and much purpose built.

At a residential development project, Trillium will provide a place for relaxation and allow residents and their guests an experience in the end of a busy day. Modern conveniences such as a convenience store, valet shop, laundromat, and other service facilities will also be available for residents.

Strategically located along Edsa corner T. Benitez Street, Trillium is a mere 10 minutes away from major commercial centers like SM City North Edsa and Trinoma Mall. Trillium is also near various government offices, including the Quezon City Hall and institutions like the Quezon Memorial Circle, schools, hospitals and other middle-class and high-end residential subdivisions.

The condominium is easily accessible via Edsa where public transport is available 24/7 and is walking distance to two Metro Rail Transit Terminal stations, Quezon Avenue and North Edsa.

Trillium is being developed by Archi- Cons Architects. It is scheduled to be completed by November 2010.

Review for realty broker's licensure exam reset

URBAN INSTITUTE OF REAL Estate recently announced its new schedules for Comprehensive Review Seminar for Licensure (CRSEL) and Reviewer which will be held in Makati and Quezon City as follows:

The Saturday afternoon class will be held from 1:15 to 6:45 p.m. on March 15, April 19, 26, May 3, 10, and 17, at Mati's Restaurant, Gateway Mall, Araneta Center, Cubao, Quezon City. On March 12, April 17, 24, May 1, 8 and 15, from 1:15 to 6:45 p.m.

Highest Earlo Cruz, 1st and 8th placer in the real estate appraisers and brokers board examination respectively, and son lawyer Rea Fe. Soo-V Cruz III, the same room

shar graduated 1:1 summa cum and the highest 86 passing percentage in the May 2007 brokers licensure exam, again lived up to heroics on the subjects officially prescribed by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Urban also announced that updated copies of "Comprehensive Notes and Reviewer for Real Estate Brokers and Salespersons" and "Mastering the Real Estate Broker's Exam" are now available for distribution to aspiring examinees. The two best selling texts of recent books contains all the board exam topics with more than 200 past board questions and answers, weaved succinctly in board subject required by DTI. This reviewer will also be a handy reference for real estate developers, practitioners and property owners.

For other details or advance registration, Urban Institute may be reached at 681-0826 or 681-0833 or at 0916-4269574 or 0921-4859431, or e-mail urbanin@pacific.net.ph or urbaninstitute@gmail.com.

BTr to negotiate rates of T-bills, bonds

By Michelle V. Rosca

DUE TO THE GOODBILL maze's failure to auction peso-treasury securities since early February, the Bureau of the Treasury has decided to negotiate the rates of Treasury bills and bonds with banks.

In a memorandum issued yesterday, the BTr said banks eligible to deal in government securities may negotiate the yield of treasury bills and bonds they earn today.

Finance Undersecretary Roberto Tan, who is also serving national treasurer, said, however, that the negotiated yields for the treasury bills and bonds would have to be close in rates to the secondary market.

The yield on the 91-day treasury bills currently focuses at 4.668 percent, while the 5-year treasury bonds fetches a rate of 6.82 percent.

He said the BTr was confident to would get a better deal through a negotiated sale and not be forced to accept the "absurdly high" rates sought by banks during the regular auctions.

"The BTr has been rejecting its bids for the 91-and-182-day treasury bills since Feb. 6, during which it accepted only a few bids for the 364-day bills.

Since then, the BTr has rejected all bids citing the high interest rates sought by the banks.

Tan said there was no reason to push the rates tolerable rightly because the government was improving its financial condition.

The finance official also said the BTr was seriously considering canceling auctions for T-bills in the second quarter because of weak appetite the that season likes.

The BTr, also said in the memorandum that it does not have to formally announce the negotiated sale of treasury bills and treasury bonds.

Also, the BTr opened a facility where government-owned and -controlled corporations may buy treasury bills and bonds from the BTr over-the-counter.

Interest rates on treasury bills and bonds sold over the counter will be benchmarked on latest yields appeared on previous auctions, the Finance official said.

Cut red tape to spur growth of mining industry, gov't urged

By Reena F. Domingo

Delays holding back boom in sector, group says

THE FEDERATION OF PHILIPPINE INDUSTries yesterday called on the government to cut red tape in processing mining permits, saying the process has to be hastened to allow local players to benefit from the doubled-priced mining boom.

FPI president Jesus L. Arranza said in an interview yesterday that an "unreasonably long-drawn application process" for getting a mineral production sharing agreement with the government was the biggest deterrent to investors—foreign and domestic alike—who plan to venture into mining.

"The bureaucratic red tape in MPSAs is an oldder morning from one gridlock to another gridlock and still another before listing a coal viaduct traffic," Arranza lamented.

The foreign companies are flocking to the Philippines to take advantage of great opportunities in mining to a welcome development, but this also points out the impediment of enabling local firms to take advantage of the country's vast mineral reserves, he said.

"Our primary interest should be that of our own people, and where and when it can be helped, Filipino investors should ahead ahead of the line for any government incentive or help," Arranza said.

The FPI president cited as example the plight of SR Metals Inc., a new player whose application for a MPSA "has hit a snag somewhere in the bureaucratic tunnel."

According to Arranza, SRMI has secured the endorsements of local officials and the approval of communities where it would operate, as well as the environmental compliance certificate.

"But still, the all-important MPSA has not been obtained, which is unusual and tempting to happen in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources under Secretary Lito Atienza," he said. "According to Hochbeck Gets business colleagues, increase indeed on fast action on any matter brought to his office for decision."

SRMI, which is controlled by the Gutierrez family known in the construction and equipment rental business, has a pending nickel project in Tubay, Agusan del Norte.

Arranza said the "unnecessary delay" in processing SRMI's MPSA would mean loss of millions of pesos in potential taxes for the local and national government and job opportunities for some 2,000 people that SRMI is expected to hire.

Seafood exporters make a splash in US

By Amy R. Remo

FILIPINO SEAFOOD EXPORTERS bagged close to $1.1 million worth of sales during the Boston Seafood Show, which the local Department of Agriculture hosted last Feb. 24-26.

Exporters who took part in the show were Bluefin Seafood Export Inc., JS Mercado Seafood Supply, Asia Stones, Fisher Boys Inc., Iloilo Trading, MG Seafood and S.A.R. Sea Resources Corp.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said these export deals covered tuna, octopus, lungsa and value-added seafood products like fish, lapu-lapu and scampi, white-meat crustacean.

"The Boston fair is the largest seafood exhibition in the United States, attracting close to 18,000 buyers across the globe.

"Filipino exporters who participated in the show were not only able to meet buyers of their seafood products but were also able to learn new technologies, and develop or strengthen connections with American counterparts," Yap said.

Yap, who is in the United States this week, is set to address the Washington International Renewable Energy Conference.

Yap will likewise spearhead a Philippine agricultural investment and trade mission to promote North American investments in the country's biofuels industry and high-value commercial crops milestone.

He will also hold bilateral talks with his counterpart counterparts, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer, to discuss the strengthening of the agricultural and trade cooperation pact between Manila and Washington.

Kuwaiti sheik checks Clark airport prospects

By Tarcelo Grojo
Inquirer Central Luzon

CLARK FREEPORT—THE HEAD of Kuwait, Iraqi Amir Al-Kharafi, visited the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport here last week to check investment prospects at the aviation complex.

"I think the Gateway hotel region will be boosting because of the upgrading of the DMIA to serve the people of this country," Al-Kharafi said in a statement released the other day by the state-owned Clark International Airport Corp., which manages the development of the DMIA.

Al-Kharafi is vice president of the Kharafi Group and chairs Kuwait Pipe Industries and Oil Services Co.

During the visit, CAC president and chief executive officer Victor Jose Lacanaza, briefed Al-Kharafi on the ongoing projects at the DMIA, particularly the international gateway project that aims to serve 10 million passengers a year.

The projects are covered by a master development plan for the 2,300-hectare aviation complex left by the United States Air Force.

Lacanaza expressed hope that Kuwaiti investors would establish the DMIA in their global projects, especially in airport development.

According to him, more foreign air carriers and domestic airlines were expected to soon operate at the DMIA once Presidents Macapagal Arroyo signs the executive order to further liberalize the air industry in Clark and at the Subic Bay Freeport in Bataan and Zambales.

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MOTORING

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Editor Cesar D. Matigasang

Be foolproof vs unscrupulous casa mechanics

By Tessa B. Salazar

TIMES ARE HARD, AND some carmakers may be neglecting their technicians—the brain and soul of the cars business—but does that give a struggling or underpaid casa mechanic a license to, well, fool you? Let's state the question around: Will you give the opportunistic mechanic a good enough reason to put one over you with your crudity or gullibility?

The truth is, not all cases are out equal, and not all case mechanics are honest. If you do an informal survey of your trusted friends (those who do tell objective tales), chances are they will share with you a number of several bizarre stories, and not of the paranormal kind, but of the purely human ones.

Some mechanics the Inquirer Motoring has talked to said they had yet to encounter colleagues cheating their customers, and as long as there is no proof, they would consider those tales as just tall ones, pure hearsays. You be the judge, dear car owners.

But on the meantime, it wouldn't hurt if you "foolproofed" yourself from such unscrupulous acts, would it?

Customers versus tips

Interviews with several car owners and colleagues in the motoring industry who have maintained and had their cars serviced in casas have revealed common-sense tips on how not to be "taken for a ride" in the service bays.

The first line of protection is to keep the watch the mechanics are doing well within your sight. Some dealerships provide viewing decks at the service area, with comfortable lounges. However, not all casas will afford you this advantage, and, admittedly, it is actually dangerous to loiter around the service bays, what with all that heavy equipment, oil slick on the floor, and loose parts lying around; once you have to actually inspect the sigit that reads "authorized personnel only").

So, if you can't be there, do the next best thing: Keep in touch with your technician's cell or service bay manager. But don't be the nagging type.

Be friendly with them. Engage in light chatter. Try to get them to warm up to you so they'll open up to you.

Generous tip

Make them feel that you're treating them as respected professionals. And after they get the job done on your car, don't forget to give a generous tip. They will remember you, so that the next time you bring your car in, you'll be treated not like just another customer, but maybe like an old acquaintance, and they will personally see to it that you won't be shortchanged.

Arit Bagaza, a columnist of Top Gear Philippines magazine, recently wrote about some mechanics confessing to him how they cheated on their customers.

Aris said he would personally talk to the mechanic assigned to his car. If he did sense that the mechanic was overpaid—or was treated shabbily on his job to the point that the mechanic would pull a fast one on every customer the cuts assigned on him, Aris would waste no time telling him point-blank: "Pare, 'wag na na akong cutsilan, help me pitch my car, ayusin na lang natin. Friend, natural if **dinaya**ngang me, just help me get my car fixed, and I'll take care of you after, word."

Bagaza, who earned his automotive know-how in the machine shop in Don Bosco Technical Institute (Makati), and whose brother is an automotive diesel mechanic, would also ask the mechanic not to change the parts of his car that were still running good.

He also notes one advice from a colleague: That friend would ask the mechanic to survey the prices of certain parts outside the casa (which would usually cost cut cheaper), and smuggle that part inside the casa.

How would the mechanics do it? Aris said that the mechanics would read over the cars, and while at it, would change the parts outside. These mechanics know where to find quality yet low-priced parts outside, he said.

Bagaza said he had looked on the profiles of scores of the mechanics he had talked to, and many of them were commercial workers for six months at a time, which means they had no security of tenure.

'Transparent' casa

Some car manufacturers nowadays, however, have been proud to say that their service bays have become "transparent" areas.

Those casas have designed their service area in customer-side, which means the car owners can freely roam inside designated areas of the service bays to accompany their mechanics as he or she services their cars.

Take, for instance, Motor Image Philippines, the exclusive dealer of Subaru in the country. Motor Image stressed that it was fully aware that many Subaru owners were car enthusiasts, and were therefore meticulous in almost all aspects of the driving experience, especially in the maintenance and servicing ones.

Subaru Impreza STI 2007 owner Jaime, 36, (who wouldn't want his surname printed) made some modifications in his car recently with Motor Image Filipinas performing the installation work for him. He said that he worked side-by-side with the mechanic during the process.

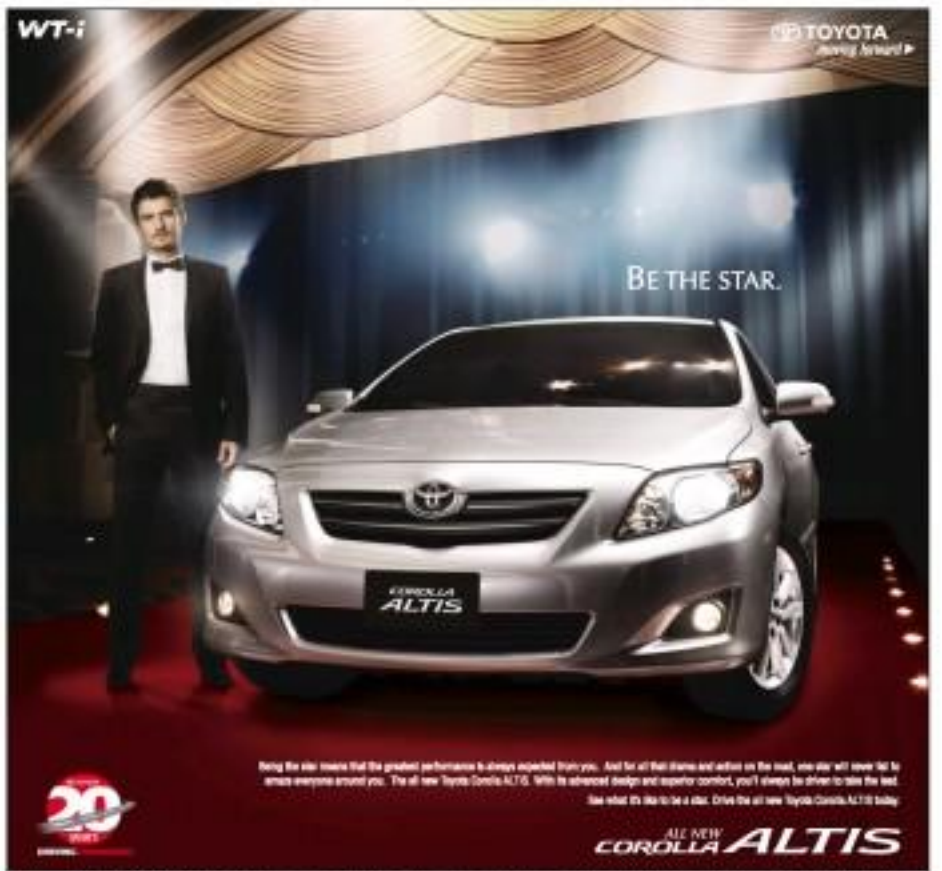
Establish trust with customers

Subaru car owners are also free to look at their cars even during regular servicing, said Motor Image Philippines' Ariel de Jesus. He said this would be an opportunity for them to get more educated about the car, and a chance for a young car company like Motor Image to establish trust with the customers.

A car industry member who refused to be named said other casas refused the owners to stay with their car as it was being serviced because of one notable reason: loitering around the area could be dangerous.

Some filmmaker casas such as in Makati, Pasig, San Fernando, Subicsubic and Cebu encourage owners to watch their cars while being serviced through viewing decks.

And service bays, for three years, ask customers to be present at the customer reception process as part of what it terms as "quality care" process. Customers are asked to stay while their cars are inspected by the technicians. The service advisor would show point to the owners the worn-out parts that needed replacing and parts that were still in good condition. The majority of food deliveries were also said to offer their own viewing decks.



Real-world rally rockets

MY DRIFT

Andre Subosa

Three letters, two cars and one championship: Mitsubishi's Evo and Subaru's STI are two of the hottest pocket rockets for 2008

Ali Ali Swift performs his down maneuver

THE YEAR TWO SHOULD GO DOWN as one of the most important years in the history of performance cars. This is a story that starts our ambitious enough. Two Japanese manufacturers made it their mission to rule the automotive world on its head. The plan was to introduce affordable driver's cars with awesome levels of modern-era grip, character, aesthetics usually associated with more pedigreed performance brands.

After years of cornering the highest level of rallying, Mitsubishi and Subaru would release two of the most definitive examples of this head-going two-car segment. Their new releases ushered in a rivalry that would be beyond the rough and tumble stages of the WRC. These are cars that can hold their own in the unforgiving world of the performance car as definite predators of the highest order.

The world of rally replica

A decade and a half later, the world of the rally replica is color-coded in two: the red and white letters of the Lancer Evolution and the sporty livery of the Subaru Impreza WRX STI. As before, these opposing model names is a formula for performance that is elegant in its simplicity. Take an ultra-perfect double-barrel car, slap on rally-derived all-wheel drive, add the titanic power of a turbocharged and put it out on everyday roads. The speed was now to the range jump up to 340 Nm.

The rock star clash-pop icon of rally replicas had to be the Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution. Inside lovers, the Lancer Evolution has more brewer Championships under its belt, four

MARKED gone without a trace

crowns from 1996 to 1999 under the then-brown reign of legend Tommi Makinen (a) stand that he quite a while, the Evo was king.

Now straight out of the Galant 1604 development program, the Lancer Evolution I was good for 210 bhp and 300 Nm of torque. By Evolution IV, the chassis changed and 260 bhp and 400 Nm from turbocharged engine. Evolution V brought further tweaks from the WRC, including body flares and improvements that had the torque jump up to 360 Nm.

Change into tamer suits

By 2001, Further WRC involvement ushered in the Evolution VII (complete with a new chassis, an active center differential and turbocharger developments) upping torque numbers further while making the power available lower in the rpm range. By this model, the Lancer Evolution started to change into a tamer automobile—a Dodge carried all the way to the nose to be released Evo X.

Dropping the Lancer model name may be the first clue, but Evo X seems to have put larger pave to its sights. The 2008 Evolution is definitely Mitsubishi's attempt to cross over across the sport touring sedan segment dominated by the likes of the five-serving, 69-powered automobile monster like Audi S4 and the BMW M3.

Proudly carrying the rally-ending banner above is the Subaru Impreza STI. Three championships—Colin McRae's in 1995, Richard Burns' in 2001 and Petter Solberg's 2003—provide this car with a pedigree earned in competition. STI shares the Subaru Tecnica International, the high-performance and motor sports subsidiary of Fuji Heavy Industries Ltd.

Initially made from unmodified WRC models, the STI's engine put out 230 bhp and 309 Nm of torque. Detailed investigation of WRC lessons gave birth to seven versions up to date. Eleven years on, the 2008 Subaru STI continues the tradition with the wide body 330 STI 2-door 1350 bhp and 360 Nm coupe) and an "all the STI bells and whistles" 4205 sedan.

Pushed performance numbers

A new body design in 2002 pushed the performance numbers to 280 bhp and 392 Nm of torque. Eleven years on, the STI's chassis continues further since the clear relationship of the STI to the WRC car. Special STI catalogue mounts were also produced, much like the Evolution. Current models 3203, 3203 and 3204 with the later pushing at 330 bhp can be traded ten-six in 2007.

The current generation STI looks curved to October's 2007 sale, with a supposed lift around the world sometime in 2008. This model marks the first time the STI body lines will differ dramatically from that of the standard WRX. Like the Evo X, it sought 8 inches to the car's stance. Output is expected to be 300 bhp and 390 Nm of torque. Expect the usual number of updates over a model life that could stretch 2014.

It looks like the rally-replica story as we know it might end with the 2008 on Impreza WRX STI. No longer challenged by a direct competitor, there might not be enough impetus to improve like before. Even if others like Ford, Citroen and Suzuki enter this segment soon, there is another plot twist looming on the horizon. A rule change in the WRC is in effect for 2008, one that will set a new standard for the cars that will be used by the championship. When that happens, the four-wheel-drive, turbo-charged batches of today will become relics of the bygone past. Thirty over while this magnificent era lasts.

Generations of Lancer Evolutions on display

DOLF SANTIAGO, OWNER of Emperor Motorsports, a specialty tuner shop that specializes in Lancer Evolutions, says that owners of Lancer Evos are a fun-loving lot. Although they are very serious about their cars and the tuning they put in their beloved pocket rockets, they regularly take fun-time going out of town to enjoy their lives.

In a rare annual gathering of the faithful, several generations of the Lancer Evolutions were displayed at the Manila International Auto Show. The first gathering started in 2005 with a full lineup of the Lancer Evolutions starting from the Evolution I.

In 2006, the show saw the public debut of the Evolution X. The all-new Evolution X is

Ali Ali Swift

slated to be introduced to the local market sometime in 2008.

Subaru and Russ Swift

Last year, the World Trade Center became the venue for the Russ Swift-driven Subaru Impreza Driving Demo Show at the Manila International Auto Show and the backstage drifting/ burn circular tire marks and smells of burnt rubber as he displayed his spectacular precision driving. He thrilled the audience with his signature 2-wheel maneuver, donut and jaw-dropping maneuver as he displayed his theatrical antics while driving in several stock high performance Subaru cars.

The Subaru maneuver by no means is child's play and without any modifications. Check out Subaru's full performance by searching from Swift's maneuvers at YouTube.com (search: Russ Swift Manila Auto show).

Russ Swift was the most behind several thrilling scenes in the movie "Italian Job" and his name is synonymous to the Subaru World record-breaking career as the fastest donut spin and also holds two more world records in the fastest 3 turns and parallel parking in two seconds flat.

He even taught a few grandmothers on how to do the donut maneuver in a TV appearance on MNC's Top Gear Show. The Russ Swift Precision Driving Show will be back this year on April 3-6 at the Manila International Auto Show at the World Trade Center.

MotorScope

Land Rover introduces LRX concept

LAND ROVER REVEALS AN EXCITING VISION OF its future with the LRX concept – a radical evolution of Land Rover design that signals the brand's shift into new areas of the market, while remaining true to its core values.

As the company prepares to celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2008, the LRX concept car, with its more sophisticated look, lighter weight and considerably increased technologies, clearly addresses the needs of a changing world and reflects the potential of 120 g/km CO2 emissions.

"The LRX concept delivers the powerful message that we are as serious about sustainability as we are committed about the environmental pressures and desirability of our vehicles," says Phil Popham, Land Rover's managing director.

LRX is described as a cross-over and dramatically extends the scope of what Land Rover represents. Though 140-litre (3.8 l) shorter than the Freelander 2/LR2 and 200 mm (8.1 in.) lower, LRX was considered as a premium car, designed to appeal to a new family segment of the Freelander's club and the presence of a large vehicle, but in a more compact package.

The first all-new Land Rover revealed since Gerry McGovern became the company's design director, LRX is a radical reflection of the Land Rover range, combining the contemporary elements and desirability of our vehicles," says Phil Popham, Land Rover's managing director.

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"LRX has a highly desirable identity and the design attributes ideally fit its capability, while clearly underlining our position in the premium sector," it's Land Rover that would be comfortable on Bond Street or Fifth Avenue, but wouldn't flinch at getting its wheels dirty," Macgovern says.

Its compact size is one of its greatest assets, which will appeal to anyone who wants the versatile ability of a single 4x4 with the cachet of the Land Rover name. In addition, its lower weight and the reduced aerodynamic drag resulting from its smaller frontal area would help give significant gains in fuel efficiency and reduced CO2 emissions.

LRX is considered as highly fuel-efficient. Its fastest-specification, 2.0 -litre turbo-diesel hybrid, capable of running under diesel. In combination with other Land Rover technologies, the hybrid would reduce fuel consumption by as much as 30 percent compared with other 4x4s of comparable size, and reduce emissions to approximately 120 g/km.

LRX's improved efficiencies are the result of advanced mechanical and electrical energy-saving elements, which are combined to achieve considerable

LRX

gains in energy terms.

The concept's integrated Gentle Rear Axle (Terex Glide) is particularly significant in Land Rover terms, as it would allow LRX to use electric drive alone at lower speeds while retaining full-wheel maximum drive ability in tough conditions. Unlike the hybrid technology used by some 4x4 rivals, Land Rover's unique solution retains mechanical drive to all four wheels.

The LRX, entirely developed in-house by Gerry McGovern's team, has a very dynamic profile, with a distinctive taper to the floating roofline and a muscular shoulder running the length of the car, accentuated by the rising beltline.

The interior of the LRX concept clearly shows how a compact Land Rover can still be roomy, practical, versatile and sophisticated. The impressively executed cabin features a combination of soft leathers in rich tan and dark chocolate, with polished aluminium details, while the visible structure of the seats, hand-sewn panels and roof architecture not only give a highly distinctive look but also help save weight.

CATS Motors brings in limited Chrysler 300C Startech edition

SOME SAY IT WITH MUSCLE? PERHAPS. TAILORED suit, diferio with cheek jewelry, a cup of the tea every, maybe even a big-screen plasma TV. But how to make of success make a room distinctive statement than Lloyd's car—particularly one that has become the stuff of cop videos and Hollywood movies: the Chrysler 300C.

It's apparent from the outset that the Chrysler 300C is a class place of automotive engineering, but with Chrysler learning up with the one of the leading names in performance tuning, the sedan has certainly been exclusively equipped for an even more sophisticated styling.

Startech, best known the makers of Britain's high-performance tuning and design for Mercedes-Benz cars, now unveils its masterpiece for the legendary Chrysler marque. The Chrysler 300C Startech Edition is a limited edition with only 70 units available in the country. The Chrysler 300C Startech Edition was brought in by CATS Motors Inc. to offer automobile luxury with a look that's as fierce as the bristled astronaut per American cars once were.

A proud and prestigious vehicle since its introduction, the Chrysler 300C's aluminum lines have even accolades for its distinctive styling, enemy in terror and powerful performance capabilities, which include a 292-hp 3.5 -liter V6 engine, a 250-hp 2.7-liter V6 and a 340 hp Hemi V8 engine. The exterior styling, beginning with the Startech signature Chrome to the with Matte design, emphasized cross-edged luxury that lends a sporty yet elegant look to the Chrysler 300C's already sleek and refined profile. Startech's 300C's also has an outstanding antenna. Already standing out with its stylish 19-inch wheels and HID headlamps, a grand entrance is accentuated further by the addition of the Startech illuminated door sills, the Startech side mirrors, partial air vent, and the Startech rear spoiler.

A long list of interior conveniences includes premium leather seats, Electronic Vehicle Information Center, sunroof, and a killer 276-watt digital amplifier with the Boston Acoustics surround system.

Overall, the commanding character of the Chrysler 300C Startech edition is reinforced with the official Startech badge seen on the sides and the rear of the vehicle.

Combined with the brand's prominence and Startech's innovation, the Limited Edition 300C is clearly destined to make automotive history as one more that stands for what automobiles can and should be.

First photos of the safest, most stunning Volvo ever

HERE ARE THE FIRST PHOTOS OF ONE OF THE most eye-catching new car models—the new Volvo XC60. "It's not only the safest Volvo ever. If you ask me, it's also the most stunning. Not a bad combination, is it?" asks Volvo Cars President and CEO Fredrik Arp.

The new XC60 has its premiere showing at the international car show in Geneva on March 4 and the first cars will reach dealers in Europe in autumn 2008.

John Carr: one crossover does battle into what is

The exciting model's toughest and fastest growing segment, boasting an existing mix of two-car styles. Downloaded, the unmistakable, capable XC models are pumped up, creating a strong effect in body muscled with tough and rugged characters and large wheels. Up above, the flowing lines create the sporty charisma of a coupé.

"This car is charged with more emotion

VOLVO XC60

than ever before," says Volvo Cars Design Director Steve Mattin.

A variety of intelligent safety systems are another important part of the XC60 model's special character. The big news is City Safety—a unique feature that can help the driver avoid or reduce the effects of the type of low-speed impacts that can occur during traffic and traffic tailbacks. If the car is about to drive into the vehicle in front and the driver does not react, the car brakes itself.

Give your car a sizzling shine during the Holy Week break

HAVE YOU BEEN PLANNING TO HAVE YOUR CAR repainted but couldn't find the time to do it? Well, the break being offered by this coming Holy Week may be the next time. If you're not visiting your site and only car that week, you might as well take it to The Wet Look for a guaranteed sizzling paint job.

Yes, The Wet Look will be working on your car this entire Holy Week to ensure that you will have your car just when you need it.

Danny Tuason, president of The Wet Look, said car owners who want to get their cars detailed often have a dilemma during holidays because they are worried that they might not have anyone to work on their cars.

"At The Wet Look, they can get their shiny car in just 10 days. The applies even on holidays like Christmas and Holy Week. Our people continue to work after going to church just to ensure that all our customers get their car on the day that they need it," he said.

Danny pointed out that those who want to get their car the Monday after Easter would book for a paint job as early as today and bring their car to The Wet Look on 8880 Metropolitan 12.

He said most of the clients would rather not have a car for just three days—from March 12 to 14—and get a repainting car after Holy Week than have no car for a straight 10 days.

"This is the opportunity the long Holy Week break presents," he said. "And this can also apply to those who have two cars and who will be using the bigger car at the site or going to the provinces during Holy Week, instead of just leaving their small car in their garage. They can have it repainted and make productive use of the time that the car is not being used," Tuason added.

Affordable motor sports and Formula racing

IS CAR RACING, LIKE HORSE RACING, the sport of kings in terms of expense?

Asked by a freelance writer about the cost of competing in motor sports, Automobile Association Philippines (AAP) director Mandy Eduque, chair of AAP's motor sports committee, gave a conservative estimate ranging from P300,000 to P250,000 to prepare a car for a race—just at the beginner's level.

Eduque, a former car rally competitor, revealed that preparing a car for the international circuit would cost about half a million pesos, conservatively speaking. Add to this the cost of hiring mechanics and the investment in physical fitness required to withstand the stress of racing while wearing layers of clothing, insulated in a vehicle with no air conditioning...and the cost estimate reaches a total sum that would discourage most aspiring young drivers.

Authorized

At the 13th AAP Motor Sports Awards Night last month, Eduque talked about what AAP is doing to make motor sports more affordable. As the only Philippine member of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, the Paris-based organization that governs motor sports worldwide, AAP is authorized to promote and sanction motor sports, i.e. see to it that motor sport events in this country are fair, affordable and safe.

In his speech reporting on motor sports in 2005 and the outlook for 2006, Eduque reiterated AAP's position that the only way to increase the number of competitors in motor sports is to make it affordable to the greatest number. Thus, AAP will not allow its National Champions to come from Series whose rules give an unfair advantage in some, nor sanction Series where the cost of being competitive is prohibitive. "Better to see a large grid where drivers proficiency is the determining factor than a small grid where the cost of equipment is," he said.

Formula racing

The challenge of making motor sports more affordable is inextricably linked to the problem that has confronted the country's most talented drivers for several generations now: how to break into Formula Car racing after cutting their teeth in Karting. At present, the only alternative for young Filipino drivers is to enter Asian Formula 3 (AF3), but in Eduque's opinion which is shared by many, the jump from Karting to F3 is too abrupt and running costs are too expensive.

He noted that in the Asian region, there is Formula Renault, but it is local Chinese Series and difficult to get in, while Formula BMW is prohibitively expensive without major sponsorship. While the United States has a broader number for motor sports and sponsorship may be easier to get, it is somewhat removed from the preoccupations of Formula racing which, the heroes in his course, is centered in Europe. And the aspiring young Filipino driver's Holy Grail is still Formula racing in Europe, Eduque pointed out.

The ASAA

To address the problem collectively, the continent motor sport authorities of the Fifth Asia Zone, including AAP, are establishing the Asia Sport Academy Asia (ASAA) in Johore, Malaysia, to provide young drivers who are at least 15 years old the skills and discipline necessary to transition from Karting to Formula racing. The school, which begins operating within the year, will be managed by the Asia Sport Academy (ASA), previously known as La Filmer-FFSA of Le Mans, France.

Started many years ago by SLP and Renault, ASA developed Formula One superstar Alain Prost and lists among its recent graduates F1 drivers Sebastien Bourdais and Franck Montagny. True to its commitment to help young Filipinos to break into formula racing, AAP is investing P1 million to ASAA by subsidizing in two of ASAA's 20 Formula campuses. Filipino students at ASAA will be given priority in the use of AAP's two cars.

P5.5M tuition

Aside from this, the Filipino students at ASAA will pay only US$15,000 compared to the regular tuition of US$26,000 for a three-month course. Incidentally, the tuition at ASA Le Mans for one year is 90,000 euros, which is equivalent to 5,525,148 Philippine pesos.

The Filipino drivers get a chance to reach ASA in France since ASAA will annually use its asset providing students and send the best two in a Series free one-year course at Le Mans. What's more, ASA continues its own Formula Campus Series for its students all over Europe and the Middle East as part of its curriculum. Each year's winner is awarded a full courtesy with a European Formula Renault Team and full sponsorship, says Eduque, who visited ASA Le Mans last October.

Through AAP therefore, ASAA offers young Filipino drivers the opportunity to gain the skills necessary for European Formula racing and possible entry into the world's top motor sport series.

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Speed like lightning, crash like thunder.

ON THE ROAD

Aide Sevilla-Hendoza

WINDSHIELD
CRACK
REPAIR
NOT REPLACEMENT EMISSION CURE
MANILA MIDWEST

THE COUNTRY'S leading race car drivers were honored during the Automobile Association Philippines' 13th Annual Motor Sports Awards at the Valle Verde Country Club, Pasig City on Feb. 22. The driver of the year awardees are with AAP director and motor sports committee head Mandy Eduque (far right). The awardees are (from right, after Eduque) Glyzon Mendoza for sedans, Carlos Arnaz for full-faired, Jody Cuaresma (represented by his wife Perpetua) for circuit, Stefano Mercado for touring, Noel Barcelona for 4x4, and Jonathan Tio (not shown) for drag racing. Group 1 class champion award of the Philippine Touring Car Championship was presented to Alvin Santos (far left).

Honda's VCM 6 4 3 optimizes power and fuel economy

HONDA CARS PHILIPPINES INC. is set to introduce a new engine technology that goes beyond power. Arriving in the 4th Gen V6 Honda Accord is the i-VTEC (intelligent Variable Valve Timing and Electronic Lift Control) engine equipped with Variable Cylinder Management (VCM), a new generation of fuel efficient technologies.

Combining power and fuel economy is typically impossible in conventional engines. With the VCM system, optimal power output, promising fuel economy and lesser harmful emissions in several driving situations (increase/decrease) is simply closing down cylinders when not needed. VCM makes the number of cylinders to be activated to match one's driving requirements.

Full-power output

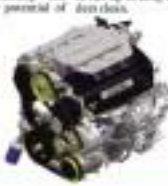
During startup, acceleration, high-speed driving along North Luzon Expressway or uphill climbing in Baguio City, the engine operates on all 6 cylinders, thereby unleashing full power output potential of the Accord. But mid-speed driving along Subic or climbing a moderately inclined road, the engine deactivates 2 cylinders and runs on 4 cylinders.

Meanwhile, fuel economy is optimized while cruising around town on roads are speed or driving down hill from Tagaytay. It is when the engine runs at 3 cylinder mode while the other 3 cylinders are closed down. With the VCM system, it is like having three engines in one.

Seamless activation and deactivation of cylinders from 6 to either 4 or 3 brings about the coining of its nickname, VCM 6-4-3.

The ingenuity behind Honda's VCM system is that to complements with its VTEC concept. VTEC adjusts valve timing and valve opening depending on the driving situation to optimize fuel economy and power output. Honda uses VTEC mechanism in closing down cylinders as it deactivates and closes the cylinders intake and exhaust valves. In inactive cylinders, spark plugs continue to fire up to keep the cylinders clean.

ACCORD engine



MOTORING

Editor Cesar D. Mangosing

BMW's new cars should help change diesel perception

By Charles E. Bolton

WHILE A LOT OF PEOPLE are excited with the imminent arrival of hydrogen-powered cars—which generate clean energy from renewable resources—we may be forgetting that this may take a little longer than we would like to think.

Yes, we do have hydrogen-powered cars today that could actually run, as so many manufacturers have been presenting us every motor show.

Sadly, these cars are still too expensive to be mass produced not to mention that our leaders have yet to settle with the issue of how to efficiently produce, distribute and store hydrogen.

So what can an environmentally conscious car consumer going to do at the moment?

Answer

The answer would seem to lie in Europe, where half of the vehicles bought are diesel-powered engines.

It's not only because the fuel prices in Europe—particularly the gasoline—are so high (because of taxes) but that the industry leaders there have long decided that the key in improving the air quality and reducing petroleum consumption lie in perfecting diesel technology.

As a result, European car giants were able to come up with diesel engines that are generations ahead of what is still powering our jeepneys, trucks and buses here.

These new generation diesel engines are several times more fuel-efficient than their predecessors (even much higher when compared to their gasoline counterparts) and emit much less carbon dioxide, a main culprit in global warming.

See and drive

Indeed, those are the diesel engine-powered vehicles that visitors of the recent BMW event were able to see and were able to drive.

The three-day Torque BMW 1pn Driving Experience held at the Estancia Marapacal Boulevard in Pasay City featured the German automaker's latest diesel-powered vehicles: BMW 120d, X3 2.0d A/T and 330d Sport.

The much anticipated BMW 120d achieves a new level of performance with its new powerful yet economical 2.0-liter diesel engine.

This four-cylinder engine could deliver a maximum output of 177 horsepower and peak torque of 350 Nm, allowing the 120d to accelerate from 0 to 100 kph in just 7.6 seconds before going on to a top speed of 220 kph.

Better fuel consumption

Even better, the 120d's average fuel consumption (under the EU standard) is 4.9 liters for 100 kilometers, which is equivalent to 20.4 kilometers per liter.

Its CO_2 emission level of more 130 grams per km is equally impressive.

Also debuting at the Torque BMW 1pn Driving Experience is the new BMW X3 2.0d A/T, which allows an increase in power by 20 horsepower and torque by 20 Nm compared to its predecessors.

Despite these improvements, the BMW X3 2.0d A/T manages a 10 percent lower fuel consumption (average fuel consumption is a very modest 6.5 liters per 100 kilometers, which is equivalent to 15.4 km per liter).

This improvement also allows the new X3 2.0d A/T to exhibit a CO_2 emissions of 172 grams per kilometers, thereby setting a new standard in this segment.

BMW 120d, with its third-generation common-rail diesel engine could accelerate 0 to 100 kph in just 7.6 seconds and go on to speed up to a whopping 220 kph.

Output increased

A better enthusiasts should be glad to know that the engine output of the new BMW 330d Sport has just been increased to 231 horsepower (that's four more than the previous model's).

This 3.0-liter powerplant could dish out a maximum torque of 500 Nm, accelerate from 0 to 100 kph in just 6.0 seconds and attain a top speed of 250 kph.

While accomplishing all these feats, the 330d Sport averages a fuel consumption of 13.6 km per liter, which is approximately 32 percent lower than the previous model.

Biggest manufacturer

This is no surprise for the biggest manufacturer of solely premium automobiles BMW has been known in the market for also dishing out a vast number of high-performance, low-emission, low-consumption diesel engines in a variety of configurations.

These new diesel models come with an all-aluminum crankcase that not only provides significant weight reduction, but also ensures better fuel economy and significant improvement of agility (since the fuels are now crisper a much reduced load).

Rotation management has also been much improved, with the use of a particulate filter as well as an oxidation catalyst, which are integrated to these new BMW diesel engines.

LIFESTYLE

Editor Thelma Elanan San Juan
Chief of Correspondents Pam Pastor

2bU! HITS THE ROAD AGAIN

Has the travel bug bitten you yet? Inquirer 2bU! brings more stories of adventure and exploration. Leave your comfort zone, walk out that door and take this journey with us

Spectacular hot-air balloon festival / C2

The churros of Kunming, China/D3

Learning Spanish in Salamanca /C3

Luxury at the Badian Island Resort /D1-D4

You can always *Aim High, Pinay!*

Like Judy Ann Santos who continues to aim high, you can be like her too!

When I was 5 years old, we passed by the newly built ice-skating rink at a mall. Seeing people balance themselves on ice on thin steel blades sparked my curiosity and ignited my competitive spirit. I wanted to conquer the slippery ice. I tried it out and fell in love. As I grew up, I tried out other activities such as ballet, jazz and gymnastics. But it was ready to figure-skating where my achievements increased and as it motivated me to pursue it with more passion. I would train six times a week, calling the ice skating rink my second home. I have two figure skating coaches who inspire me to train harder – a technical coach to help me execute the spins, jumps, steps and turns and an artistic coach for choreography. I even look up Flamenco to learn other dance techniques, which could enhance my skating program. Of course, it is not easy juggling school work which starts at 7am, being a consistent honor student, and training from 4 pm to as late as 11 pm at night. It really takes patience, dedication and energy to do what I do everyday.

I am thankful to my parents for their support, morally and financially, as they have allowed me to compete in many competitions here and abroad. I have won close to 200 medals now. Currently, I am the "Miss Ice Princess." In this competition, I also won the "Fanfare Choice Award" and "Best in Talent." I also won the "Star Factor" award in the recent Stars on Ice competition on QTV11.

I still have so many dreams such as participating in the Olympics and getting into a good university. I am still young and there are still many things to achieve. And I am just starting...

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Diving into the Russian market

Our participation in the Golden Dolphin Festival in Moscow drew interest in the country

MODELING scuba diving gear

FREE introductory dive lessons were given during the Moscow fair

Text and photos by Rowena C. Bergas

SCUBA DIVING IS NOW ONE OF THE world's fastest-growing and most accessible adventure sports activities. This was evident during the Moscow International Diving Festival Golden Dolphin, recently held at Gorodok Diver in Moscow, Russia.

Participants from 33 countries included manufacturers and distributors of diving and sport fishing equipment, underwater photo and video shops, scuba training schools, dive tourism companies, travel representatives, filmmakers and photographers and writers from global diving publications.

Photos and video competitions featuring old wrecks and underwater scenery were also held during the festival. Last year's five winning entries from Russia showcased Philippine marine life.

"The Philippine islands have the widest variety of marine life in the world. The **smallest and the biggest fish** can be found in our waters. Besides, diving in the Philippines gives you so many options that every dive will be different and mind-blowing, even if it is in the same dive site," says Undersea Caviton, Department of Tourism Assistant Secretary for Sports and Wellness Tourism.

"The best Philippine dive sites, Caviton says, are in Daanol, Sorsogon; Anilao, Batangas; Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro; Busuanga and Coron Bay in Palawan; Bantayan island, Aklan; Apo Reef, Mindoro; Moalboal, Mactan Island, Malapascua Island, Bohol; camp in Cebu; and Tubbataha Reefs, Sulu Sea.

"The Philippines has had its fair share of dynamite fishing and cyanide poisoning, Sec. Caviton says, **this is now a thing of the past.**

"Such practices are being addressed by Philippine authorities, who are training local fishermen to the use of ecological net **catching of small fish. They are also teaching** good husbandry techniques for the sustainability of this industry. More Filipinos recognize scholar failure in tourism."

Campaign in Russia

The Philippine participation in the Golden Dolphin festival runs last year, and in the Spa and Health Showroom and Leisure Fair Moscow in 2008, but actively generated a lot of interest in the country.

"We would like to make sure this interest is sustained by coming up with new marketing strategies that will keep the country in equal footing, if not better, with its Southeast Asian neighbors, especially now that Southeast Asian countries are making quite an impressive mercup for tourists," Caviton says.

Russia's opening up to the world, its booming economy, political stability, as well as its people's fascination with Asia as an exotic destination, are the key factors that have made the DOT add Russia to its expanding list of relatively new target markets. Russian travelers have also been ranked by the World Tourism Organization as the 10th biggest spenders in the world.

With a population of 270 million, the Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are among the most promising markets in Europe. Tourism is an interest growing sector, mainly due to the 70 years of travel restrictions under the old USSR that have now been removed.

Based on a recent WTO survey, the significant increase in the number of Russians traveling abroad is expected to place the country as the 20th rank with respect to tourists per-

RUSSIAN sportswomen doing water gymnastics

THE RESURRECTION CHURCH inside the Kremlin

during countries in the year 2020.

"This is why Edward Grigoriev, DOT market representative of Russia and the CIS, has been urging the country's tourism officials to aggressively market the Philippines in Russia and get more Russian tourists to visit the country.

Grigoriev says outbound tourists from Russia reached 6.4 million in 2006. The number of Russian tourists is projected to grow more as the Russian economy continues to register growth, boosted by high oil prices and the relatively cheap ruble [Russian currency], he adds.

"Russia have to note straight year of growth, averaging 6.5 percent. Since 2000, investment and consumer drivers demand have played a noticeably increasing role. Total capital investments have averaged gains greater than 10 percent over the last four years, and real personal incomes have averaged increases of 12 percent," he says.

Grigoriev says Russian tourists to the Philippines in 2006 numbered 12,000, a 30-percent increase over the 2005 figure. He expected that the earnings from these tourists could reach $9.45 million.

Aggressive marketing

However, Grigoriev says little is known about the Philippines in Russia and the CIS.

In Southeast Asia, Thailand remains the most popular destination for Russians and CIS tourists, he points out. In 2006, over 120,000 tourists from Russia and CIS visited Thailand, with Airasya getting the budget travelers. Two other destinations in Thailand—Phuket and Samui—also enjoyed brisk business from Russians, Grigoriev adds.

Indonesia comes in as the second on a fourth-year Asian destination for the Russian market with 23,000 arrivals in 2006, while Malaysia had 9,000 arrivals.

Aside from these three countries, the Philippines also competes with Goa in India, the Caribbean islands, Maldives and Vietnam, Grigoriev says.

He urges the Philippines to capitalize on its dry season up to the middle of June, since **more than three-quarters of CIS parties** travelling during the winter season.

"The Russian tourists spend about $3,000 on airfare and would be willing to spend the same amount during their stay in the Philippines," Grigoriev says.

The DOT has reported that from January to August 2007, tourist arrivals from Russia and the CIS grew by 7.2 percent compared to the same period in 2006. They are currently the Philippines' seventh biggest source of tourists from the European region.

"The Philippines has all the necessary things for Russian clients. It has a lot of dive sites which are different from one another. They have good infrastructure, world-class resorts. The country is an oasis of good Filipino dive shops. There are qualified instructors and dedicated food. That's why when we're in the Philippines, we try to maximize our fun there. The country is a perfect blend of nature and people," Grigoriev says.

Bigger, better balloon show

CAVITOONS float in the air.

By Bianca Cuevas
Inquirer Correspondent

ALL ROADS LED TO BARANGAY recently as thousands of people trooped to the Clark airfield to watch multicolored hot-air balloons fill the sky.

The event was the Philippine International Hot-Air Balloon Fiesta 09-HABF1. Now on its 12th year, it is purportedly the country's biggest aviation spectacular.

Each year, hot-air balloons are flown in by pilots from different countries. This year, balloonists from the United States, United Kingdom, Sweden, Singapore, the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Switzerland, Japan, Thailand and Korea were the crowd's main attraction.

Aside from the hot-air balloons, the event also featured skydiving, kite flying exhibitions, helicopter flyins and motorcycle stunts.

Pilots also formed the country silhouette to outdo each other in various **aviation** creations, such as balloon-bursting competitions (where toy balloons were floated in the air for the pilots to pop with their airplanes), different forms of aerobatics, formation flying and hands-dropping exhibitions, and air rallies.

Jun Cortizo, United Travel Services marketing manager, one of the cosponsors of the FIESTA, announced the festival a success.

"Thousands of people visited Clark for the balloon festival," Cortizo said. Although the balloonists weren't stellar, of the one of the days due to strong winds, there was still a good moment, and people still managed to enjoy themselves."

E-mail the author at bianca.cuevas@yahoo.com

CEBEAL mascot makes its debut.

Prepare for the worst, expect the unexpected

By Karina Sotto
24/7 Correspondent

BE ORGANIZED WHEN PACKING a trip. It helps save time—and you from stress. Here are 12 tips.

1. Pack light. Having been **over and over, packing light is almost** a virtue. But really, packing light is important if you want to save yourself from the hassle of lugging around heavy bags. If you're going on a short **trip, consider bringing just a backpack** or carry-on, and a smaller bag for your day-to-day adventures.

Having to check in unnecessary luggage will have you waiting at the luggage carousel.

Going on a shopping trip? Leave enough space in your luggage. Airlines have weight limits. Bringing too much stuff leaves you little room for **your purchases. You may have to pay** extra for additional bills, or worse, have to leave some items behind.

2. Prepare for the unexpected. As a bonafide of ourselves, learned on a trip to Boracay in December 2006, a dream vacation could turn **fly** into into nightmare. The island suffered a direct hit from what was dubbed as "worst typhoon in 20 years," leaving them stranded on the island as violent weather conditions **rendered boats and ferries.**

Thankfully, most of them had the common sense to bring extra clothes and spare cash. And—bring extra medicines.

3. Bring a little bit of everything. Unsure whether the shoe you're wearing provides enough room? Bring **some, in little portions.** Bring small bottles of shampoo, body wash, lotion, insect repellent. Be mindful of airline regulations on liquids, though.

4. Pack in plastic. Zip-lock **bags are handy.** They keep your laundry dry and prevent bombs such as "shampoo explosions." You can store liquids in zip-lock bags in Customs or security officials won't have to go through all of your stuff. They're great for wet items, too, such as swimsuits that didn't have enough time to dry on your last day at the beach. Keep plastics in a minimum though, and choose recycle.

5. When in doubt, don't bring it. If you have doubts whether the items you've planning to bring will be allowed on board, leave them behind. You risk having your favorite lighter, Swiss knife, cosmetic items of "excess" quantities on DFO-it, or what have you confiscated. You can also get penalized for bringing prohibited goods.

6. Bring medicine. Be prepared for the worst. Equip yourself with a small first-aid kit, and pack medicines such as multivitamins, antihistamines, pain relievers, cough and cold medicines, anti-hypersensitivity and other medications you may need.

7. Split up your valuables. Don't put all of your eggs in one basket. Cash, ATM and credit cards should be in different pockets so you don't lose everything in one go. Or, better yet, leave them in your hotel safety deposit box.

8. Keep personal details on hand. Bring various forms of identification. Bring photocopies of your IDs and store them separately from your ID cards so if you end up losing your IDs, you'll still have access to important information. Keep an ID card with emergency numbers at all times.

9. Tag it. Make sure your bags have identification so it's you can easily spot yours among a sea of luggage, and it can be returned to you if it gets lost. Traveling can be so stressful that sometimes people just pick up their bags (or what they presume to be theirs) as soon as they come out of the luggage carousel. You wouldn't want to **message** through other people's dirty laundry in search of ID so you can return the bag you took by mistake.

10. Research on your destination. Know exactly where you're going so you can prepare accordingly. If it's 10° there, it's highly unlikely you'll need your swimsuit. Find out if locals speak English. Locate the nearest police station. Know where your embassy is. Check out tourist destinations. You can a map of the place you're visiting as you don't waste time getting lost. Brushes, of course, that is the entire point of your trip.

11. Bring a camera. Forgetting your camera is much worse than leaving your cell phone. Missed opportunity is what you call great adventures without photos to help you remember them by. Then again, use this temptation to your advantage. Ask companions if they already found a way to give you the best of both worlds through family photos equipped with stellar cameras. Bring your mobile device's charger, extra batteries and memory cards. Bringing film? Carry them on board. Screening equipment for checked luggage may damage their rolls of film.

12. Relax! Sometimes you must **ease off a bit** and not have to make a check list of must-dos and must-sees. The point of going on a vacation is taking a break and having fun.

Happy trip!

E-mail the author at ernst@philtel.net.

Password

Geneve Madrigal Gelo

What a way to learn Spanish

Shop till... you speak the language

LAST SUMMER, I WENT TO SPAIN to immerse myself in the country's language, culture and food. I had a blast.

If you really want to learn a language, it's most effective to study it in its native soil. When I was in Spain, hardly anyone spoke English. One of the things that pushed me to start speaking Spanish there was shopping!

There were so many stores and markets selling brightly colored tea dresses, fresh and dried fruits, olives and more. I was forced to speak Spanish to be able to buy anything.

At the University of Salamanca, my first few hours in the morning were devoted to challenging classes in grammar, conversation, history and culture. Traveling with friends was a gentle way to learn the culture. I was glad that, during my first month in Spain, I had a roommate from Manila, because my basic "modern" didn't speak a word of English!

Every day we would make our way through the teeming and turning small streets of Salamanca to the University campus. At midday we had a snack break at the Plaza Mayor, where we'd grab some tea & churro ice cream—ordering in Spanish, of course.

There were concerts almost every night, and tapas bars served yummy Tortilla Española and thick Spanish hot chocolates.

Some evenings we enjoyed just hanging out in the beautiful, tree-lined park. We reversed wacky games or just sat around and played pinoy tsismis. We also jogged one or

SPANISH courtyard

FOUNTAINS on a flowered walkway

MORE gardens in Salamanca

Living statue

THE AUTHOR with her classmates

ICONIC road

after my classmates had gone back to Manila. My mother, a cousin and I traveled to Costa del Sol and stayed in a walled 15th-century medieval town called Teyre de la Frontera. There, we enrolled in another Spanish language course. All in all, it was a highly fulfilling, enriching adventure.

E-mail: [redacted]

hours and hours of creamily sexiness covered in dark chocolate. Guess what they're called here? Filipinos.

Our weekends were spent traveling to cultural sites and museums. After three weeks in Salamanca, we went on a mini-road trip around Spain, visiting hospital sites and churches. El Alhambra's Muslim architecture featured intricate carvings and soothing water features.

One last week was spent in the bustling city of Madrid, visiting El Prado, the largest art gallery in the world. I had really Flemish works by Rogier van der Weyden and pieces by Spanish masters Goya, Murillo, Velazquez and Pedro Berruguete. We also saw La Reina Sofia. Originally built as a hospital in the 18th century, it is now a contemporary art museum.

I was stared at on our picnic by Salvador Dali and Picasso as well as Miró, Juan Gris and Solana. I was particularly overwhelmed by Picasso's "Guernica," which depicts the physical and emotional devastation that war can produce.

I stayed one for four weeks more in Spain

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Pagdating sa noodles, walang tatalo sa pagkasarap ang *Payless*. Dagdag pa rito, sa presyong mas mura, mas madami kang makukuha! Good deal, 'di ba?

Sabi nga ni Carmina, "Di mapagkakaila na 'Best Value' ang *Payless Pancit Canton*. Mas marami ang laman ng *Payless* kaysa ibang brands... sa presyong abot-kaya! Ngayon, lalo pang pinasarap ang lasa at noodles nito kaya mas enjoy kainin ang Original, Extra Hot & Spicy, Chili mansi at Kalamansi Flavor ng *Payless Pancit Canton*. "Super Offer" naman ang *Payless Bihon Sarap Bowl* dahil mas mahigit 30 sang 34% kaysa other brands na bihon ang laman nito. Alalahin mo, ang isang *Payless* instant bowl ay 'sing dami ng isa't kalahating bowls. Mas nakabusog sa tiyan! Dinagdagan pa 'yan ng 11 vegetable at minerals, kaya mas busog ka rito sa umaga. May masarap na flavor ang *Payless Bihon Sarap Bowl*."

Para sa kanya, obvious na kung ano ang best deal? Bukod sa pa pipili ng 'Ito' *Bihon Payless, Get More!*

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SAMSUNG

Zobel sisters committed to Filipino talent now more than ever

IT'S BABY STEPS FORWARD, but we will get there."

That is the seemingly small yet dogged attitude to promote Filipino arts and culture, particularly fashion.

Zobel and her sister, Mia, hosted a private lunch recently to talk about Share Filipino, the three-month-long celebration of world-class Filipino talent and its highlight, the grand fashion show on March 13 at Greenbelt 5.

It's impressive, if not amazing, how the Zobel women are committed to the promotion of Filipino talent, and we knowledgeable about it. They are apparently wired to the design and arts scene.

Sofia, for instance, is supportive of young fashion designers. She spoke about Melissa Short, who is getting known for her clothes label, Sarah, whose items are made of natural organic material to suit hip edge design.

She talked also about accessories designer Victoria Maria and Dutch Carvajan (Carvajan's Avenue line is now sold at Greenbelt 5.)

For years now, Sofia has been devoted to promoting Bohol heritage sites, crafts and culture. It's an advocacy that has gained momentum and helped lure Bohol into the tourist destination today. Sofia is now working to have livelihood communities around Bohol's heritage sites—a progressive yet environmental approach.

Share Filipino is the brainchild of their father, the patriarch Jaime Zobel de Ayala, the chairman emeritus of the Ayala Group.

"When my father received a request to promote Filipino culture, what's the best of the Filipino, we approached Ines Ongsiako Ongpin to come up with fashion ideas. As you know, we're Ines loyalists," Sofia said.

Valera et al

The result will be the elaborate fashion shows to be staged starting March 13 that will pay tribute to designers who helped define Philippine fashion—from Ramon Valera to Pitoy Moreno, Renee Salud, Ben Farrales, Gang Gamboa, Joe Salazar, Inno Sotto, Joaggi Cardenas, and Cesar Legaspi.

Also honored are the designers who have opened stores at Greenbelt 5 or whose works are available there—Jojo Tan Gan, Ben Valdez, Rudy Hidalgo, Tina Maravilla-Crespo, Pastor Dan, Jun Escario, Amina Arunay, Lilo Almario, Mitch Cartagena, Rio Rocha, Vic Raba, Myla, Victoria Martin, Kate Torralba, Neric Orpia, among others.

Greenbelt 5, as the public is now seeing, is a bold, visionary step for Ayala. For the first time in Philippine retail, there's a floor or two devoted to Filipino designers and artists. By doing so, Ayala has reinvented its faith in and commitment to the Filipino artist.

The good news is, the Filipino designer wing has been getting good traffic. Greenbelt 5 is helping build a market for the Filipino designer—a trailblazing move.

Lesley Mobo

Also set is the fashion show of Lesley Mobo, the young Filipino designer who's making a name in London, from his humble beginnings. Lesley is winning a number of followers in the country, including Sofia and Mia themselves.

Pilbo: Sofia visited London, she made it a point to meet with Mobo. "Where my father thought of this Bravo Filipino, we know it was a good idea to invite Lesley over," said Sofia.

"Lesley is a very good example of how our having interest will not stop the Filipino from achieving and doing great," said Mia.

In no time is that statement more reassuring and comforting than now.

A Kiarin movella by CARLO J. CAPARAS

To have and to hold

Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA

A-LIPIN

BY JOSE ABREU

PUGAD BABOY

BY TEK JUNIOR

GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT

ATOMO AND WIDGY

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KIKO MACHINE

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BEN

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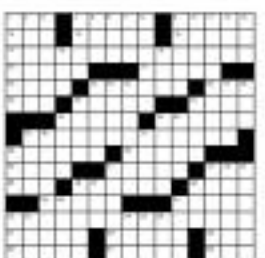
DAILY CROSSWORD

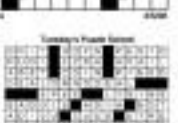


By Philip J. Anderson
Pasatiempo Ink

ACROSS
1 Hut for mules
7 Lifeboats
12 Animation wood
15 Hero's reward
16 Boosters
18 Pain pill blame
19 Eve's address on her last date?
20 Ump's address on her last date?
21 Founders of Rome
22 Ancient sooner
23 Hoagies
24 CBS successor
25 Regularity's material
27 Fanatical
28 Herbaceous vine
30 Library category
31 Hang around
32 Beatrice or Harry's sister
34 Lunatic's sense
35 Bright, sharp
37 Entertainers
41 Some commercials
42 Bird and chicken
43 Indigo-based
44 Bread spice
45 Reading regularly
46 Devouring
47 Eagle's nest
48 "Ol' man River" and others
49 Mole
50 Inadequate
51 Short circuits
52 Tiny amounts
53 Bathtub alcohol
54 Cape and Canova

DOWN
1 Kitten's partner
2 Commencement of colored gas?
3 Fleeced player?
4 Fly high
5 James Osborn Wood, "... Mid-Town"
6 Inc. in England
7 Anger
8 Pulchritudinal
9 Gulfstream
10 Nail
11 Notes on agitation
12 Old Persian greeting
13 Simply Lee
14 "You're ..., Mac"
17 Hockey defensive good
20 Clinton Comedy" pool
26 Spanish river
29 Feudal serfs' estates
31 Robert of "The Natural"
32 Mexican rivers
33 Take a break
35 Modern dictionary
36 Ice-cream holder
38 Ancient
39 Tuxedo
40 Rooming-house
43 Beak
44 Presidential nickname
46 Rebel group
47 Rolled grass
48 Ending in

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved



HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

YOU WERE TODAY (March 5): Emotionally, People Alone is your interesting theme. Issues for you: Do it to feel vibrant? Pursuing one to nail validation. Or moves. Big intensity of your passions to what you're doing. Or with whom you're doing it. Or not doing it with anyone. Or you're involved with the less passionate in order to make room for some. Going now to write your life.

BORN ON that date: Actress Kevin Connolly, actor Mel Taylor Gibson

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): If you are feeling fussed, focused or furious with friends or a group, in order to make something happen, you'll inspire do it. You want to make a difference.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Someone with a lot to say about one who is open or more established does. Hear you think now. Tread over traffic flow. We can be a really silly pair.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Your perception of friends' motivations (personal self-opportunities) is better viewed now, patterns, parts, feasible challenge and absolute command. Or.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Someone might be generous to you today because he or she finds you interesting, a new venue, one might be generous to someone else who is ready. It's easy to be sympathetic.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a good time to catch up on partners and close friends. It's easy to establish mutual interests and bonds.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Things are looking darkly good at work. Co-workers are supportive of one we're there. In addition, people admire your talents or knowledge. You're popular with trouble.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Conversation is the key to your success now. You're very ready to reach goals, and people that you're ready. Additions to all means do so. (You will have a chance to do this.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Your ideas and intentions are somewhat limited to each other today. You can have a good opportunity to be that in a tuned way. You might also want to listen. Your actions are free or really things more beautiful.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're not much more than a cog in your daily life. It's all around you. The more you feel good, doesn't it?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're an excellent foil for businesses and partnerships. If you're thinking, you will be quite outspoken this day. Be sure you're right.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You feel especially good now, which makes you attractive. You really admire someone. It's OK to have your own opinion, but you might have your feet on the ground.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You're very much in touch with people and their feelings today. You practically can read people's minds. You feel sympathetic to someone, and you want to help.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU

Concepts Sudoku

By Dave Green

4	8	2						
1			2			9		
9		3		6		5	2	
	1			2				
		4	3		1	8		
				9			7	
		1		8		2		3
	6				5			9
3						4	5	8

Difficulty Level ★★★

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HOW TO PLAY SUDOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

8	7	9	3	6	5	4	2	1
3	6	1	8	4	9	7	5	2
4	2	5	3	7	1	8	6	9
6	5	2	1	8	3	9	7	4
7	9	3	4	5	6	2	1	8
1	8	4	7	9	2	6	5	3
9	1	8	5	2	7	3	4	6
2	3	6	9	1	4	5	8	7
5	4	7	6	3	8	1	9	2

LOCALS demonstrate some cultural song traditional Chinese garments.

CAPTAIN at the helm in Green Lake Park with a hot cup of tea and spicy sausages from street side vendors.

Charming Kunming

The capital of China's Yunnan province is a city of flowers and lush scenery

Text and photos by Irene C. Perez

NOT just in Thailand. Elephant show in the Yunnan Ethnic Village

LIFE-SIZE animal figures such as this proud peacock are common in Kunming parks.

CUTE Chinese dolls as firecracker cell-phone danglers are great pasalubong.

KUNMING, THE CAPITAL of the Yunnan province, is popularly known as "City of Eternal Spring," thanks to its year-round comfortable weather, save for occasional freezing winters. Think Chinese Baguio—minus the smoke.

Running a similar suburban charm, as it boasts a number of universities, malls and even a Wal-mart. But the "Spring City" also retains the feel of an old walled city.

Coffee, anyone?

If you're a "flower person," you'll definitely love this place, which is framed by lush mountains.

The Kunming Botanical Garden is known for its camellias, orchids, azaleas and other tropical plants. The Bird and Flower Market, on the other hand, is a voyage offering a dazzling array of blooms and winged creatures.

Resisting to look at were the "dehydrated flowers." They're not plastic, mind you, but dried flowers that still looked fresh!

We visited the Kunming Silk Factory, where rolls and rolls of the luxurious fabric are made and sold every day. We saw live (and pungent) silk worms, plus a demo on how these insects produce the material that becomes that most luxurious of fabrics. There was also a interactive show that presented us each good variants of the material.

Coffee junkies are sure to have a caffeine high at the Coffee Factory. You are given one cup as you enter, and you're encouraged to try out all varieties of coffee found in the factory. There are about a hundred...

Besides, the hotel that tastes like nectar is sweet, cream and citrus, or cheese flavors, are also offered for tasting.

Theme parks

Parks in Kunming are big, pretty much like everything else in China.

The Yunnan Ethnic Village is a theme park that displays scaled versions of the 25 ethnic groups in Yunnan Province, as well as replicas of famous landmarks. It can remind one of Sinyong Pilipino, except that it would take an entire afternoon to cover this sprawling park.

Visitors to the park are treated to glimpses of Yunnan architecture, arts, costumes, and ethnic songs and dances. Street food and souvenir shops are aplenty. An elephant show, always a hit among locals, is held daily.

If you are up for more walking, take a trip to the Golden Temple Park, also called Sagesong Pavilion, a national forest reserve with awesome scenery and manmade gardens built during the Qing Dynasty.

Located on the Mingfeng Mountains seven km northeast of Kunming, the Golden Temple, also known as Jindian Temple, hosts history and fantastic view.

The main temple was cast from 250 tons of solid bronze. The walls, pillars, rafters, roof tiles, statues, tables, even the banner are all in bronze, and collectively weigh a whopping 200 tons. It's not just the biggest bronze temple in China, it's also the heaviest and well-preserved.

It is said that the closer you get to the Golden Temple, the more lightdowned you felt. All around the temple are beautiful bonsai and flowering plants. The oldest tree in the park has lost all its leaves, but it still stands proudly in the rear garden.

Couples, kids and families in tavern also populate Green Lake Park, a picturesque, lowkey all-in-one-place in downtown Kunming.

Huge flocks of red-headed gulls migrate there from Siberia during winters. The presence of restaurants, bars, hawkers, and a small store with boats for rent are an easy reminder of Baguio's Burnham Park.

'Paushibong' shopping

And what's a trip without pasalubong shopping? If you're expecting lots of bargain and night markets here as in Beijing, you might be disappointed. There isn't enough to keep you occupied, but local stuff sure abs be had in 168 Mall in Mongkok. Almost everything there is made in China, after all.

In Kunming, forget the malls and hit the supermarkets instead.

Carrefour is a multi-level supermarket where you find the famous Yunnan ham, almonds and pistachios, chips and chocolates at low prices. If you don't mind the bulk, make your mom happy by buying her good China tea at Carrefour's.

There are more great finds at Xinhua Bookstore. Original DVDs are sold for around 20 yuan (P120) for new titles, and 10 as low as 14 yuan (P84) for classics and vintage titles.

Cute hardcover notebooks with polished paper are also sold for just 6 yuan (P36). Tasty great gifts for your journal-crazy friends.

E-mail the author at iperez@inquirer.com.ph

THE YUNNAN Military Academy, now a top tourist spot, was considered one of the best military schools in China during the Qing Dynasty and is the alma mater of several revolutionary leaders.

Island of ease and comfort

By Nikki Mark M. Sabio
ZBA7 Correspondent

BY IMAGINE ISLAND RESORT and Spa, hospitality is a way of life.

This is not a cliche. Take, for example, the way a guest is welcomed at the resort. At the dock-

ing station, the whole Badian crew breaks into their signature welcome song once you arrive. Someone puts a garland of flowers around your neck, while another accompanies you to the reception with an umbrella to shade you from the haze of the sun.

At the reception, another staff hands you a refreshing face towel soaked in very cold water, so you can wipe away the day's sweat, dirt and stress.

Badian's servers and waiters are just as courteous and helpful as the other staff members. At the resort's Panorama restaurant, they keep their distance but are very attentive. They know when to come over to top you food or pour anything, be it another round of drinks, a plate that needs to be replaced or a new set of utensils.

The food served at Panorama restaurant is an eclectic array, too. For our welcome lunch, we were served Japanese fried sushi in green, seaweed soup with squid balls, tender strips of beef with teriyaki sauce and pots of hot green tea.

For our dinner time, which was held at the beachfront, we had scallops, seaweed broth, tuna **steak with wasabi**, mashed potatoes and chicken in coconut milk. A "leaving bar" also hopped from one table to another, offering alcohol to enjoy while we enjoyed a special cultural presentation that many Korean honeymooners had flat watching and even participating in.

If you want a change of scenery a romantic meal can be arranged by the poolside while local talents serenade you with classic songs, or a memorable lunch can be had on board the motor boat Delphina anchored in Badian Bay.

ISLAND D4

BADIAN Island Resort and Spa in Cebu

Camiguin: 'Do it now before it's too late'

By Arlene Perales

"CAMIGUIN IS VERY SMALL, you can roam the whole island in a day," said my friend Mavic Hilario, when she learned that I was planning a trip to the island.

Camiguin is situated only in Bantayan so the smallest province in the Philippines.

"You'll enjoy the place, it's a little paradise," Mavic added. Other friends who've been to Camiguin have one common thing to say about my planned getaway: "Do it now before it's too late."

Hmmmm, my travel buddy Noel Milora and I will see/read later....at least for the long We just assumed that the last trip for the Camiguin bound ferry from Balingoan in Misamis Oriental would be at around 5 p.m. What a mistake!

It turned out that the last trip leaves daily at 4 p.m. We were just meeting Cagayan De Oro around that time. It takes two hours to go to the Balingoan Port from Cagayan De Oro City.

From the port in Gingoog bus, we took a chalted habal (3-seater tricycle) and spent 30 minutes on the road to Mambajao, the town capital of Camiguin, where we'd reserved a new house at the Benjamin Residence. The delivered our trip would cost more than 20 kilometers, which is already nearly half of the entire Camiguin island. It was just getting close to 9 p.m. but the whole island seemed to have gone to slumber.

At 6 the next morning, we met Regie Arca, our motorcycle rider-slash-tourist guide who would bring us to different spots in Camiguin. The goal was just to look around and see as many tourist points, because Noel was going back to Cagayan De Oro in the afternoon, and I would have to leave at 5 a.m. the next day.

We had only one day. I would later find out that such a short time was not enough

CAMIGUIN D6

Island of ease and comfort

From page D3

Natural spa

In the Bulalo Natural Spa and Wellness, great service takes the spotlight. The masseurs are all qualified and talented. The house specialty is the Bulalo Elixir or its imperative four-hand massage.

Apart from the massages, Bulalo also offers various body treatments such as body scrubs, loofah rubs, coffee granules or nutmeg rice), exotic Ginseng clay wrap, cacao seaweed or orange salt and herbs (using guava, pandan or milk).

For ultimate pampering, one can indulge in an exotic aloe vera and banana leaf body wrap or the famous seaweed treatment, seaweed bath (bath with seaweed), seaweed hand spa, seaweed foot spa, seaweed body wrap or seaweed massage.

In fact, the resort's use of seaweed, seawater and other seabased materials to relax one is apart from other resort spas. Known as Thalasso Therapy, the therapeutic treatment "of the sea" incorporates both curative and preventive properties.

From the private pools use Hydrotonal seawater to one eco-concierge in Sunday water that promotes relaxation and rebalances the body's mineral deficiencies.

Suites

All rooms in Bulalo have a private balcony, a spectacular sea and mountain view, a King-size bed or twin beds, air-conditioning, hot water 24 hours a day a bathtub filled with flowers, a shower, a water closet, a bidet, a mini-bar, hairdryer, bathrobe, slippers, sea/walkie-talkie, telephone, a cable and a CD/cassette tape player.

There are 14 Bulalo Suites, each with an elegant sofa, a glass-roofed panoramic bathroom with bathtub and separate water closet and bidet; and 18 Junior Suites and 18 Family Suites that come with open-air marble bathtub with separate shower.

The Bulalo Island Resort and Spa also has a freshwater swimming pool, bars, a game room, a TV/video room, a boutique, a children's playground, a clubhouse and a dive center.

The Bulalo dive center is conveniently located on the beachfront and is equipped with personal dive equipment. Following the standards of the Professional Association of Diving Instructors, it has classrooms for instructional videos and offers beginners, dive master and specialty courses.

Cebu has a lot of great dive spots but for ones that are just nearby yet still impressive, the island recommends five dive sites: the Coral Gardens, which is perfect for snorkeling and open water training dives; the Garden Isle where rock pole their heads out of the sand 30 to 34 meters below; the Bulalo Wall and Fisherman's Cave where the current is a little stronger so there is usually more fish activity; and Sawang, which is ideal for advanced open water navigation dive.

For the sporty ones, the resort offers tennis, table tennis, billiards, darts, badminton, volleyball, bubble cut, jetblast, aqua cycle, banana boat ride, windsurfing and paddleboating. For those who want to see underwater scenery ridiculous getting wet, Bulalo has a glass-bottomed boat. There is also rockclighting every Sunday at the Bulalo town and an orchid farm for flower-lovers.

Dolphin-watching

The highlight of my Bulalo trip is definitely the dolphin-watching. After 30 minutes aboard the resort's yacht with still no sign of Flipper, I was ready to get disappointed. Then our guides finally spotted a school of dolphins jumping out of the water and back in. After a while, I was able to get a much closer look when several dolphins playfully raced with our yacht. This went on for a while here!

Another favorite part of my trip was a visit to the fascinating Kawasan Falls, located four kilometers from the south of Bulalo resort. It's an untouched wonderfalls in three levels rich water so fresh and cold you'll feel brilliantly after the moment you get wet.

Going through the waterfalls on a raft is an amazing experience. You first have to be flat on your tummy as you race pass this very restricted opening before reaching the actual waterfalls, which can give you a unique kind of massage with its force.

After the wet and wild chapter at the waterfalls, you can be sure that your Bulalo guide is ready with a resort and a bottle of mineral water for you—yet another example of Bulalo hospitality that proves you don't need to be at the resort to feel welcome, take care of and even pampered, Bulalo-style.

Of course, when you get back to the resort, it's still the same royal treatment.

Visit www.bulalo.com

E-mail the author at mmarkabina@yahoo.com

THE JUNIOR Suites have earth-toned walls and curtains, glass wood and rattan furniture.

ON CAMPUS

UPCC's farewell concert

THE PHILIPPINE CHILDREN'S CHORUS, one of the country's premier ensembles of music to the world, is holding a farewell concert before it embarks on its 2008 "Hala, Halong Kulay: Hala Halong Bituka" European tour. The month-long tour, which will be the UPCC's 18th international tour, will be led by conductor, musical director and premier choral composer Ariel Zaldarriaga. Aside from a series of concerts in cities around Switzerland and Italy, the UPCC will also participate in the 60th Montreux Choral Festival in Switzerland and perform in the 60th Vifree festival in the Finish region of Italy. "Pamaalam" will be held at the Church of the Risen Lord inside the University of the Philippines, Diliman campus on March 7, 7 p.m. Tickets are at P100. Call (632) 926-7503/53.

BOOK DRIVE - Ex Libris UP, a University of the Philippines-based organization, is running a book drive together with the Alkimos Book Development Board. The book drive will benefit needy public schools and reading centers in the country. The campaign aims to raise the literacy levels of the youth and to spread the love of reading. The organization is looking at collecting 3,000 books by the end of the academic year. The books should not be older than 10 years in the case of textbooks and reference materials and should be in good condition. All books donated through Ex Libris UP book drive will be forwarded to the NGO(s) for distribution. Call (02) 924-5472, (0917) 5058536 or e-mail bcdrive@Yahoo.com.

CHILDREN'S CAMP - Youth Discover Nature and Arts Camp for Kids and Color Me Olive are offering "High Five — A Magical Adventure of the Five Senses," April 14-25, Sunday (always Artists' Community No. 3 (near St. Luke's Medical Center), E. Rodriguez, Quezon City. Fees: P8,500 including all materials, lunch and snacks. Discounts for registration on or before March 15 and groups (tel. 687-3001).

Camiguin: 'Do it now...

From page D3

to fully experience Camiguin's wonders.

White Island

The first stop was White Island. Breathtaking! I could see the entire island from the boat we boarded from Pixie Beach. The sand was white, soft and totally soothing to the skin. There were few people on the beach, plus some quaint lunch booths for quick seafood meals, so a huge part of the 1-km stretch of White Island was clear for my eyes in front us. That was the sweetest space and freedom I've ever experienced.

Mantigue Island

There are two islands off Camiguin for tourists to enjoy. The first is White Island, for quiet, nature-trippers and conventional swimmers; the other is Mantigue Island, which is a bit longer for about 1 km. Unlike White Island, there are trees and shade in Mantigue, which had been declared a marine sanctuary. It's perfect for snorkeling and diving.

Our group says, Roger Santos, a resident in Mantigue Island on weekdays and a tourist guide in Camiguin on weekends, can help make arrangements for lodging, boats, etc. You may text him on (0920) 2308607.

Churches and giant clams

Our guide also brought me to the San Nicho Cold Springs, Mantigue Island, the ruins of the ancient Church's original site to the old Catarman, which was buried by an earthquake followed by a deadly eruption of Mt. Vulcan in 1871; the very old Sto. Rosario Church (built in 1892); and the preservation site of giant clams at the Ardent White Beach in Barangay Catarman. The live giant clams on display included species like the Tridacna crocea, T. maxima, T. squamosa, T. derasa, T. gigas, and Hippopus hippopus.

Camiguin is still pretty much pristine and unspoiled by man. From its seven massive peaks (including Mt. Hibok-Hibok) to its waterfalls and cold and hot springs, plus its beautiful dive sites, Camiguin should be a prime destination for nature enthusiasts and passionate adventurers alike.

E-mail the author at [illegible]

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bernardo Nitorio

Website: www.inquirer.net/entertainment

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Jett Pangan talks about 'EJ'

By Pachalo Concepcion

IT'S OFFICIAL: JETT PANGAN IS NO longer just a rock singer.

Many people know he's been dabbling in theater—appearing in straight plays and musicals for the past few years.

But Ang Dyong-drumming Bulilay since Rivelin Javier in Edgar Jopson's—now on its last weekend run at the CCP—marks the first time that The Dawn vocalist and the entire band have worked together in a rock musical.

The coincidence is uncanny—Javier and Jopson having the same initials, and who went to the same school (Ateneo, different batches) and yearned baby islands as leaders. And they both died violent deaths, too.

Richy Dreza plays Javier and Fidel goes to Jopson. The Dawn's guitarist Francis Reyes, bassist Buddy Zabala, drummer Al Lorenzo perform live in the background.

In a magazine article he wrote about "EJ," Reyes talks of the band's excitement upon being asked to join the production—Lorenzo scribbling instructions on a copy of the script and even reading a book about Jopson—becomes doing a musical play had been one of their unrealized dreams: "We got a taste of one of our musical plays, with a story filled with emotional and sound orchestrics."

Reyes also remembers drinking lots of coffee during rehearsals.

In this e-mail chat, Pangan recalls more coincidences that led to The Dawn's involvement in the musical. He jests that he and the band had to learn some of their songs all over again.

Whose idea was it to use The Dawn's music for the production? How?

According to director Chito Miller, the original plan was to make it a serious, but he felt the story needed rock music, and the idea to use The Dawn came up. We were supposed to make new music for it, but upon hearing some of our songs, production decided to just use existing small two ways...the lyrics of Ed Maranan melded into the music, the others used as is, since the original words fit right to the plot.

Who as an idea have the play given.

"EJ" chronicles the lives of two prominent figures during the Marcos regime—Ferdie Javier and Edgar Jopson—by way of playing these characters to a fictional setting as spirits who share with each other stories of their earthly life of

TAKE FIVE

pp 4-5

Bollywood producer visits Manila

BOLLYWOOD FILM PRODUCER Sushmit Singh is in Manila for a wedding visit as part of a government program to promote the Philippines as a movie location site.

Singh, vice president for production of Yash Raj Films, arrived last weekend. He visited a production outfit and a broadcasting company in Quezon City and is scheduled to tour scenic spots including El Nido in Palawan, Boracay in Aklan and Subic in Pampanga.

On Saturday, the Department of Tourism and Film Development Council of the Philippines hosted a meet-and-greet dinner for Singh with key players in the local movie industry.

Yash Raj Films is one of the biggest Bollywood studios in India, according to Philippine Film Export Services Office chair Digna Santiago. Forty to 50 percent of its films is shot outside India, she added.

Marivel B. Cruz

INSIDE

Why Cris Bermont turned her back on fame Yesterday /F1

From smart-'colegiala' image to sexy young thing Rushes /F4

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Friday 6pm: Elimination night (replay 8:30pm)

Weekend replays: Saturday 5pm and Sunday 4pm

Channel 11

SUNSILK

Revealed: Mick Jagger was subject of '69 assassination plot

LONDON—MICK JAGGER revealed an assassination plot hatched in 1969 by Hells Angels, a now British Broadcasting Corp. documentary is claiming.

A pregnant sect to be broadcast on BBC Radio last night says the plot followed the rock star's purported dispute with the motorcycle gang. Jagger had wound not to use gang members as bouncers following the death of a fan at a free performance at Altamont Speedway in Northern California in December 1969.

Gang members planned to kill Jagger at his holiday home in Long Island, New York, the BBC claims. The plan was disclosed during an interview for BBC's "The FBI at 100" documentary.

Program presenter Tony Shiret said: "The boss was his by a scene and the men were thrown overboard. They all survived but made no other attempt on his life."

The gang have always denied any connection with the Altamont Speedway killing. AP

JAGGER: It's not clear if he was told of the attempt.

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AT THE CINEMAS

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GLORIETTA 4	1 THE WATER HORSE	2 10,000 B.C.	3D 10,000 B.C.	
GREENBELT 1	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 10,000 B.C.		
GREENBELT 2	1D THE VANTAGE POINT	2D 10,000 B.C.		
	3 ACROSS THE UNIVERSE	4 SLEUTH	5 10,000 B.C.	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1D 10,000 B.C.	2 THE WATER HORSE		
	3 MY BIG LOVE	4 10,000 B.C.	5 VANTAGE POINT	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 10,000 B.C.	2 THE WATER HORSE	3 P.S.	4 MY BIG LOVE
MARKET! MARKET!	1 10,000 B.C.		2 MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND	
	3 THE WATER HORSE	4 HALF BLOOD SAMURAI	5 MY BIG LOVE	
TRINOMA	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 THE WATER HORSE	3 10,000 B.C.	4 SLEUTH
	5 THE VANTAGE POINT	6 THE FLOOR	7D 10,000 B.C.	

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — MY Installment Madness — Feb.26 to Mar. 9, Glorietta Activity Center

Greenbelt — Greenbelt 4 Movie Theater Presents: BRIDESMAID MOVIE PREMIERE — March 8, 6pm, Greenbelt 3 Park

Alabang Town Center — Bravo Filipino Concert featuring Ryan Cayabyab — March 8 4 PM, Activity Center

Ayala Center Cebu — HIS & HERS PROMO — February 15 to March 15

Market! Market! — Totally Spies live at Market! Market! — Catch Sam, Clover, and Alex of Totally Spies live at Market! Market! — March 7, 4 & 6 - 6pm, 12:00 & 6:00pm, Activity Center

Cristalle — Repertory Philippines presents: ROMANCE IN 3 — February 29 to March 30, 2008 — For inquiries, pls. call 687-0110 or visit www.repertoryphilippines.com

Ayala Museum — Registration ongoing for Ayala Museum Summer Art Workshops — For more information, please call 729-7777 or 757-0486 or email ...

Tri Noma — Concert Series: Overflowing dessert choices! — March 8 - 6-10 pm - 10am: Art Lesson Trifecta Park; Jamboree for Kids with Dance Plus and Bold Out Band; March 7 - 5:30 pm: Trifecta Activity Center

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Rustan's

glorietta Greenbelt Alabang Town Center Ayala Center Cebu Trinoma Tri Noma

Opening Today

Ate

Stars Iza Miso, Caridine Reyes, Pinky Pureza, Eddie Garcia, Eva Darren

Directed by Lore Reyes

Unemployed older sister (Miso) is at odds with her younger and rebellious sibling (Reyes). Conflict arises when a man (Pandoc) comes between them. Star Star Miso produced the drama through her company Abbie Entertainment. Screenplay is by Criss Warlen. Japan Seed (a an original story by the director's collaborator Pepot Gallego. Miso says she relates well with the movie's issues. Exclusively at SM Cinemas.

The Half-Blood Samurai

Stars Jacky Woo, Jennylyn Mercado, Gabby Eigenmann, Nina Jose

Directed by Jacky Woo

Street-smart Japanese-Filipino (Woo) encounters love and discrimination after he falls for a rich man's daughter (Mercado). Chinese-Japanese actor-director-producer Woo has made a string of action movies in the Philippines in the past. Costs "Fatal Attitude" (with John Regala) to "Mah ng Lab" (with Robin Padilla). He also appeared in Great Monsters's "Panaghoy sa Suba." In this action drama flick, Steed Weinsino makes a cameo.

10,000 B.C.

Stars Steven Strait, Cliffillo Bello, Marco Khanlian, Cliff Curtis

Directed by Roland Emmerich

A woolly mammoth hunter (Strait) embarks on a mythic quest to save his lady love (Bello) who was kidnapped by enigmatic warlords. Josh Tyler of CinemaBlend.com complains: "Hollywood's disaster master Emmerich is now using special effects to obliterate our past." Ain Dr. Movie Page says: "Enjoyed some cool special effects and spectacle, but dumb screenplay." AmericanLook.com opines: "Downright lame."

Across the Universe

Stars Evan Rachel Wood, Jim Sturgess, Dana, Eddie Redmayne, TV Carpio

Directed by Julie Taymor

Star-crossed lovers, who are named after Beatles songs, are swept away with the psychedelic tidal wave that was the 1960s. A.V. Cooper of 10Zebra describes it as "ambitious, agonizing and exhausting." Roger Ebert of Chicago Sun-Times raves: It's "no mechanical marriage of cutting-edge visual techniques [and] Beatles music, but something more." Joanna Shimets of Los Angeles Times calls it "an intensely visual experience."

Sleuth

Stars Michael Caine, Jude Law

Directed by Kenneth Branagh

This remake of a 1972 flick pits an unemployed actor (Law) against the husband (Caine) of his lover in a vicious mind game. Richard Corliss of Time raves: "By the end, both stars are utterly humiliated and ... the final victim is the viewer." Ann Hornaday of Washington Post dismisses it as "a sleek, stylish stunt ... toxic." Manohla Dargis of New York Times (double star): "What was once insignificant is now insufferable."

JUDE Law in "Sleuth"

Jett Pangan ...

From page E1

dissent against the government.

How and why do you think The Down's music was able to blend in?

Apart from the music alone giving the play an earthy and urgent tone, some of the words from our songs blended with the characters' yearning for change and freedom.

This is the first time that The Down has gotten involved in a stage musical. Is there something new that the band put into the production?

The Down always gets a kick out of arranging and rearranging its new and old songs, making it the perfect canvas to challenge ourselves further.

The musical has a very serious subject. Were there any funny, embarrassing or frustrating moments during rehearsals?

We always make fun of ourselves, which is a normal occurrence anywhere. What's embarrassing and frustrating? When I fish my lines during rehearsals, and when the band misses some cues.

What did you learn from this musical?

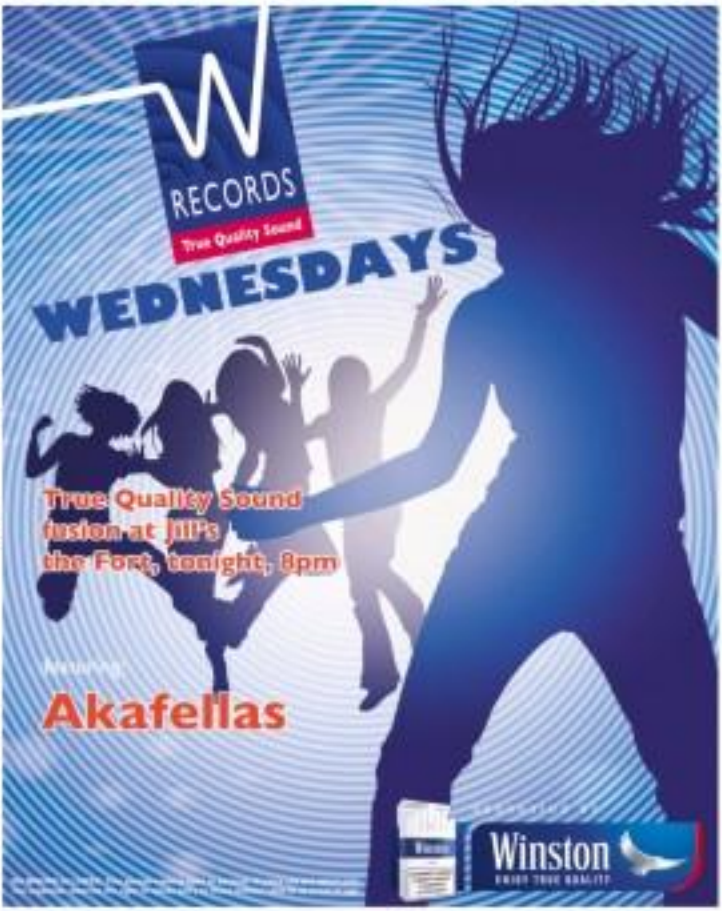
Well, I had to relearn some songs of ours, like "Can You Tell," which we haven't played in ages.

"Ely" runs on March 7, 8 and 9 at 8 p.m., with 2 p.m. matinees on Saturday and Sunday. Call 832-3661; 832-3704; 891-9999; or log on to www.tanghalangpilipino.com.)

'I'm just me'

K.D. LANG, on her eclectic musical style: "I shy away from typecasting, whether it's lesbian icon or vegetarian or country singer. To me, I'm just me and those are all aspects of my personality. I don't like being called a country singer. I'm just a vocalist."

Overheard



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'B' for 'My Big Love'

MOE CASTRO'S "MY BIG LOVE" received a "B" rating from the Cinema Evaluation Board (CEB) for its "clever"
BLU

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When fame is not top priority

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos by Rodel Rovero
Additional photos courtesy of Maricris Bermont

SHE INSISTS, NOT WITH regret, but with quiet satisfaction: "My life is completely different now."

Once a singer at the cusp of international stardom, Maricris "Cris" Bermont turned her back on show biz, to devote her time completely to her church, Word Communion, her husband and five children (and now six grandchildren).

A born again Christian, Maricris says she sings only in church now, and that guesting in concerts (like a recent Jimbo Gervasio show at Tsuneishi) came rarely.

"I'm enjoying life; I have time to stop and smell the flowers," she says and adds, in jest, "with the help of my husband's courage."

The husband is retired investment banker Jerry Garcia, who "spoils me and our kids." The children are Jheron, Mike, Jim, Nelly and Cristina. Mike is a banker, Nelly is a fourth-yearer.

Not that she's idle.

She's always been with church activities, like outreach programs for women prisoners and orphans and counseling the heartbroken.

She also took more voice lessons. "When I sing for the Lord, I want to be at my best."

Something's clear to her: "Show biz members perspired me for all this. It makes me realize [exactly] how great God is."

Dazzling color

Indeed, Cris has been a life filmed in dazzling technicolor.

Did she tell St. Paul colegiale keepers that, first joining an amateur singing contest on TV would irrevocably alter her journey.

She had previously guested on ABS-CBN shows directed by Mike Villarreal. "I came out in 'Stop, Look and Listen,' with Nina Gervasio, Eddie Gutierrez and Lea Lorena. I was one of their favorite finds."

When a talent search was cooked up in 1977, Cris joined, but didn't win. "I think it was Ding Mercado who won," she says.

So luck would have it, composer Dets Pedero, formerly of the vocal group Gentle Rain, had caught the show.

Cris recounts: "He somehow got my telephone number from the studio. Then he hired me to sing his commercial jingles for Breeze detergent and Colgate toothpaste."

Dets relates that the Female Russian Pil ignio etcetera stood out from the crowd. ("I'm Jessica," she quips, "and proud of it.")

Dets insists: "Who could ignore her with that gorgeous head of curls? She looked exotic!"

YESTERDAY

No regrets: Singer Maricris Bermont willfully turned her back on budding global stardom

WEARING a Ben Farrales terno at the 1979 Aliw Awards

AFTER-SHOW party with Joe Quirino, Tony Bennett and Reycard Bunye

WHO are Ting's Super Singers '79? A prize awaits the first reader to identify all 13 winners. E-mail entries@inquirer.com.ph.

Ah, the hairstyle was a story in itself, Cris points out.

"Director Lee Ruby suggested that I have my hair frizzed. No one else could pull that off due, [until that would give me identity."

New Zealander author John Burke, who was Showtime salon at the old Mandarin Hotel, was behind her mod-ish Afro, it is Burke's husband in "A Star is Born."

"He told me that two clients [unnecessarily] wanted to copy my hairdo," Cris says. "He said he had refused because it didn't fit their face shape."

Metro Pop '78

Pedero notes that Cris had "drumpah—a cheerful confidence that few Filipinas possess."

Plus, Pedero adds, "She's a mezzo-soprano and the timbre of her voice sounded foreign. I felt she was the right girl to sing my song."

The song was his entry in the first (1978) Metro Pop Music Festival, "Nasyo-Ako Unahin."

On competition night at the Folk Arts Theater, however, Cris was shaking like a leaf.

Laughing heartily now, she quips: "[Then I saw the First Lady [Imelda Marcos] sitting in the audience, I almost peed in my flaming formal gown!"

Vocally, she remembers that formal dress: "It was blue Chantilly lace with gold lamé."

Dets had instructed her to play with her gown, to unclasp and shine smidgen.

"He came in third, Hajji Alejandro won that year for Ryan Cayabyab's 'Kay Ganda ng Ating Musika,'" Cris says.

Metro Pop led not only to a solo album under Blackgold, but also to a slew of shows at the Manila Hotel and the famed Cabaret Bar at Hyatt Hotel.

Bennett, Bacharach

In the early 1980s, upon learning that Walt Bacharach was set to perform at the Manila Hotel, Cris volunteered to be the front act.

"Bacharach's show was moved back because of some hostilities at the time, ironically, Tony Bennett flew in."

Of course, she gladly became outside-caterer for the 111 crooner, along with the Bernard Duet, at the Folk Arts Theater and the Manila Hotel.

She has nothing but praise for, and fond memories of, the international stars.

"Tony Bennett actually sat in the audience to watch me perform—he was so nice. The Bernard Duet stuck me feel at home, though they were already big stars in Las Vegas. They didn't treat me like a newcomer."

When Bacharach finally made it to Manila, Cris was seated in the front row. "He didn't [require] a chorus act, but I met him at the Manila Hotel after-party," she recalls. "I remember he was very shy. I told him that I always sing his songs in my shower ... though now I can't remember if I actually did."

At the Latina Bar, she was backed up by pianist Rudy Francisco. "I loved that time. I started Thursday nights, then I was asked to sing on three other nights. I had to [quit so] that would have been too tiring!"

A year after Metro Pop, she was named Aliw's Most Promising Entertainer. "I was in the 16 then, and I was told to come home promo because I had mom," she says.

Int'l award

She was frequently on the road, headlining concerts organized by the First Lady, Philippine Airlines and the Ministry of Tourism. "I even sang for Princess Margaret once," she says.

The highlight of her globe-trotting was the 1982 International Festival of Song and Voice in Puerto Rico.

Good friend and fellow singer Rissa Godinez and [Jheron's] then-husband Marvin Albert brought her to the fest.

Singing Burt Bacharach's "Hello, Here I Am," Cris went through the proverbial eye of a needle to nail competition.

"On the first night, there were 39 contestants which was whittled down to 20, then 14, then 7, then 5..."

Finally, Maricris Bermont emerged victorious. When her name was called, her sister Sally was ready with the camera. "But she was so startled, she jumped while taking my picture, so naturally it came out blurry," Cris says.

With that triumph came offers to do concerts and albums in Latin America.

Word of change

"I was supposed to go onward promoting the song, but I told Boots I would rather stay in Manila," Cris says. "Slowly, I was changing—the Lord was calling me."

Michael Gumbing Twins, she turned her back on the prospect of international fame. She remembers the turning point: "My friend Jeannie T. Marte made me realize there was life beyond show biz. She brought me closer to the Lord."

That was over 25 years ago, Cris says, and she has been proud-lyly, even scholarship-lyly pleased with her decision.

"I am, by no means, perfect. Every day is a struggle, but I have peace and contentment in my life. I don't desire material things. Would you believe I own very few pieces of jewelry?"

The way she put it didn't require an answer.

E-mail: bayanisandiego@hotmail.com

AT HOME: I quite "fellow, I change diapers to stop and smell the flowers," thanks to my husband."

SHE MET Burt Bacharach at a party after his concert in Manila.

THIS IS the trophy shown in a 1982 international song festival in Puerto Rico.

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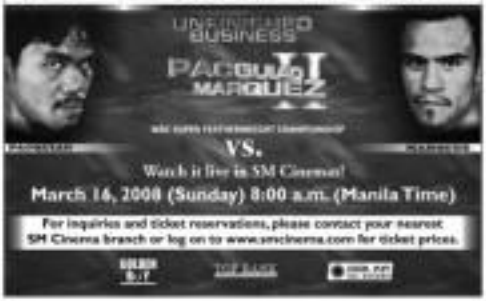

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2 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	5 THE WATER HORSE
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2 MY BIG LOVE	5 JUMPER
3 THE WATER HORSE	6 THE FLOCK

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2 MY BIG LOVE	5 JUMPER
3 THE WATER HORSE	6 THE FLOCK

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2 VANTAGE POINT	5 THE FLOCK
3 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	6 BLEUTH

STAMWILLS

1 10,000 B.C.	4 JUNO
2 MY BIG LOVE	5 PS
3 THE WATER HORSE	6 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES

BACOLOD

1 10,000 B.C.	5 IN THE NAME of the KING
2 MY BIG LOVE	6 MY BROTHER's WIFE
3 THE WATER HORSE	7 JUMPER
4 indieSine: DAYBREAK	8 JUNO

ILOILO

1 10,000 B.C.	4 JUNO
2 MY BIG LOVE	5 MY BROTHER's WIFE
3 THE WATER HORSE	6 UNTRACEABLE

A memorable H'wood tandem

IN THE MOVIES, THE MOST MEMORABLE screen teamings include Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, Greta Garbo and John Gilbert, Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni—and Paul Newman and Robert Redford.

Nestor U. Torre

VIEWFINDER

Their last pairing may raise some eyebrows, because there was nothing romantic and little that was comedic in their latest portrayals on the silver screen. But the exceptional duration they co-starred in ("Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," "The Sting") were energized with great chemistry that can come only from wonderfully compatible personalities and artistic sensibilities.

Those thoughts come to mind now because we've just viewed the new program "Extended" on the Velvet channel, and it features Newman and Redford, both together and separately—and talking at great insightful length about our another.

The program affirmed our view that, although both stars were very popular when they worked together, they had such deep respect for each other that they forgot all of the perks and frippetries of stardom and focused on helping each other come up with their best cinematic work.

Newman was considerably older than Redford, but he regarded the younger actor his artistic equal, and their scenes together crackled and popped with the exuberance of a mutually giving creative friendship. Even better, they thoroughly loved and enjoyed making movies, and the passion and delight showed and shone onscreen.

In the course of the special program, Redford shared that what he learned most from Newman was to courageously do what he thought best—and to have fun doing it!

Daring decision

This explained, he observed, Newman's "daring" decision to become a race car driver later in life than others (he was in his 40s), and to push himself until he got to championship level. He won four major circuit medals). Another information that Newman stoke to his resolve to do the fact that he continues race cars even into his 80s.

On a less daring level, Newman has also scored big with the salad dressings that he bottles and sells to raise funds for charity. Would you believe? He "dabdue" has already ground $200 million for various causes!

Turning the tables on Redford, Newman reveals that he too has learned something from his younger friend. Since he has long his love for films and filmmakers by putting up the seminal and now influential Sundance Film Institute and its world-famous festival for independent films.

Before Redford created forebears, makers of independent movies had a hard time finding support and screening venues for their iconoclastic works. Now, they have a much easier time, because major movie companies and distributors regularly send scouts to Sundance, offering all-important distribution deals to the best movies shown there.

Newman and Redford also revealed a shared love for the theater. Redford said he was moved by the successful efforts of Newman and his wife, Joanne Woodward, to rehabilitate the Westport community theater building, where many of the world's best actors had performed decades ago. Now open for artistic business again, the theater could soon entice the best-known actors to return to the stage again, after an absence of many decades. What a wonderful prospect!

'Across the Universe'

The Beatles' best-loved songs are creatively woven into the plot of Julie Taymor's exciting new musical, "Across the Universe." A love story set against the backdrop of the turbulent '60s, the film features on two star-crossed lovers, Jude and Lucy, who are swept up by tumultuous forces beyond their control. They're torn apart—but, against all odds, they find their way back to each other.

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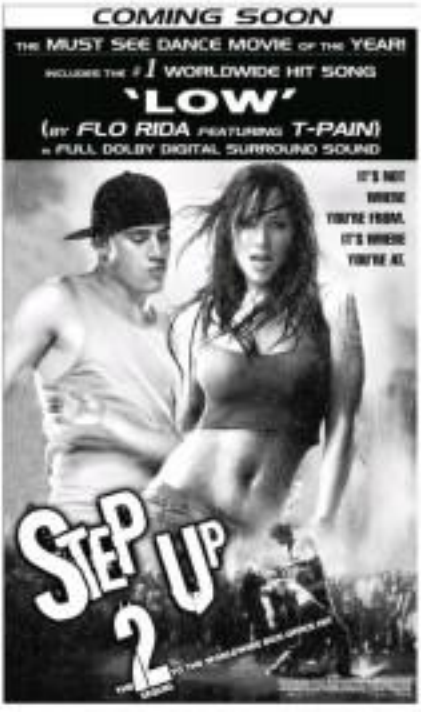

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STEP UP 2

'B' for 'My Big Love'

screenplay and "composer" acting in final films from Milby and Stonekroings.

A "B" rating entitles a movie to a 60-percent tax rebate.

"My Big Love" is an coincidence, flick," and Dayon, opening a CEO report. "The screenplay is formulaic on the whole [but] clever in some parts."

One CEO member found the story "lightweight and predictable" Another noted it certain "charm." Ahmed G. Dan

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From pot to tougher stuff; from smart to sexy

By the Inquirer and Inquirer.net Entertainment Staff

GRADUATES OF A TALENT search, these two boys were supposedly caught smoking pot in a bar.

The boys popular of the duo fame since turned on to use heavier stuff.

He allegedly tried to buy raw crab from another girl who wisely declined, refusing to tolerate his nasty habit.

Sexy Assumpcionista

Mika Jose is being packaged as "the next sexy young thing."

An information dispatch we received announced, "Ex-PBB Teen housemate is ready for sexier, more daring assignments."

It continued: "It's been more than a year since Mika Jose, the beautiful and outspoken Assumpcionista... [she] joined the Starlight Upon her father's advice, [she went] back to school to continue her European studies program at De La Salle University.

KIRIA Jose

Rushes

Betty bows

Jimmy Bruno Jr. Inquirer has decided not to renew GMA 7, ABS-CBN is attaching a handful of its female stars to the "Betty La Fea" title.

Everyone, from Bea Alonzo to Maria Rodriguez, has been mentioned.

Conspicuously not on the short list is Angle Moss who had jumped the gun, telling reporters that she was being considered.

Angle, in the know insist the plum part would most likely go to Anne Curtis, as a reward for not moving back to GMA 7.

In any case, stay tuned. Anne has had plenty of practice playing the Ugly Duckling in "Kampanerang Kuba."

Regine redux

She read that, apart from "Betty" and a new musical-variety show, ABS-CBN also offered Regine the hosting job in "Pinoy Dream Academy," said Ryan Agoncillo.

Since Mr. Songbird's no longer interested, it's supposedly a non-starter. even IC Concepcion and Bianca Gonzalez.

No, Lito Cayetano isn't directing the show.

Speaking of Regine, someone chose to love tweets that listing "Pinoy Idol" was the reason that the almost left the Kapuso fold.

"It wasn't because her movie with Ogie Alcasid was delayed. They had already met for that

REGINE Velasquez

ANNE Curtis

project when the Kapamilya intrigue broke," claims a source.

Guybrush goes to town

"Daybreak," says its dramaturges, has climbed her year's indispensable list "Rome & Juliet" as the top groove in Imelda Soliongco Gallardo.

The gay film is opening in Robinsons Galleria and Rockwell this week.

Top of the Talk Shows:

• IC Concepcion on requested romantic links with Richard Gutierrez: "We're friends. If there's anything more that he wants out of it, that's for him to answer." (In short, she had's in his court.)

• Richard Gutierrez on IC: "For now, I have the most sincere and purest intentions for her." (And he drives the truck.)

• Shaina Ramos, on her kissing scene with Mark Herras in the last taping day of "My Only Love":

"Ang kissing scene daw kahit paghatingan ng 'tao'? Isday-isday pa rin kami. Di naman ganoon. Ngayo na last scene na 'yun, nalaki-ko na rin na parang, shucks, last time ko na magagawa ito. Ngayon unahi ng mga tao na nandoon pang kami." (And they would be right!)

• Mark, on the last day of his team up with Shaina:

"Siyempre ito na ma-miss ko siya kasi si Shaina as a co-worker, mahusay siya, mahusay." (Right.)

• Jake Zyrsella on rumors he eloped with Lovi Poe:

"Magsagot nga kami sa mga tanong nyo sa Indiana Jones, magsisiyam na kami. Lalo na sabi, dahil... kumapos ka nang sa ang tatlumpu sa mukha mahigit. Ano kaya sagutan. Hindi kami magtatanan." (That's the longest version of "no" that anyone's heard so far.)

• Gretchen Barretto's message to "all" the people in love life:

"Magpapasalamat ako sa inyong lahat sa lahat sa mga panahon na, pinapakita ninyo sa akin ang pagmamahal. Alam naman ninyo, Hindi ako magtatanan." (That's the longest version of "no" that anyone's heard so far.)

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"Magpapasalamat ako sa inyong lahat sa lahat sa mga panahon na, pinapakita ninyo sa akin ang pagmamahal. Alam naman ninyo, Hindi ako magtatanan." (Ulo.)

• Robin Padilla, on brother Rustom's upcoming hits pics:

"Ibang klase pagka nakakanood ako 'yun eh... nakakapasan sa pagkatao. Meron siyang gustong pinapagawa sa pinili nyang karakter. Bawa maganda eh, maganda kaya."

• Ryan Agoncillo, on Presidente Bonnie Gordon-Ejercito on plans for a IC Concepcion-Richard Gutierrez re-production with Star Cinema:

"Ang sinad Aunt ng broken na Star Cinema na wa'ko talking... ang good naman talaga ng mga Tito namin sa kanila. Wala naman lalo

MANICA Gonzalez

pa 'yung mga network wars. Everybody should look beyond that for the good of the Filipino viewers." (Boy parang 'di yata gano'n.)

• Dina Bonnevie on Pia Guanio:

"Ang nagsipot ko kay Pia, eh kanina lang [dito]." (Talk about a backhand.)

• Pia Guanio on dealing with boyfriend Vic Sotto's family:

"We have to give them that much respect and distance. Hindi sa lahat ng pagkakataon, aasipot mo ang sarili mo. Kailangan mag-ano."

• Cristine Reyes on rumors she is transferring to ABS-CBN:

"Hindi ko pwedeng sagutin 'yan ngayon dahil gusto kong manatiya ang Nipi Nagiy Bagal Bago Nagsalita." (In short, wala pang comment.)

INTERVIEW, The Buzz, Showbiz Central

(E-mail tsaha@inquirer.com.ph)

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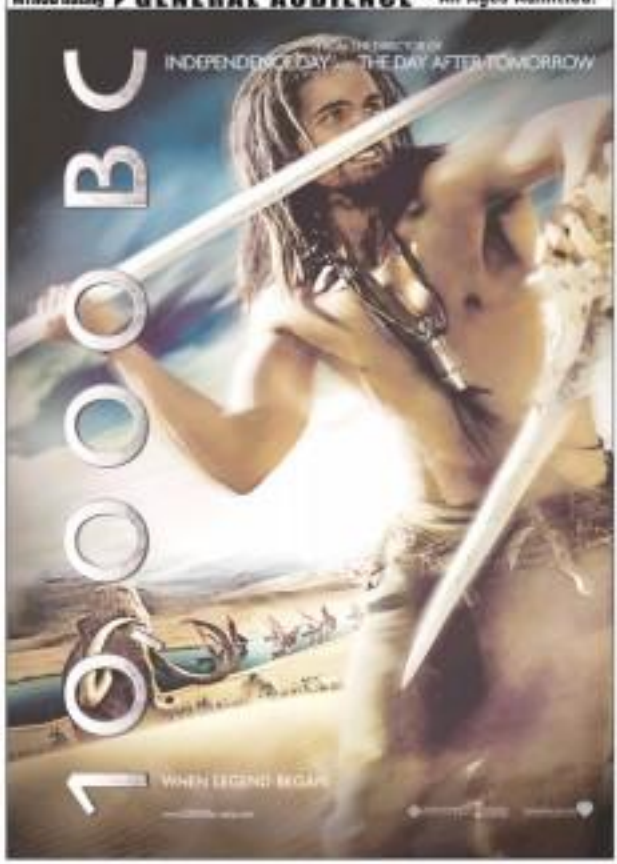

Supporting actress insecure about lead star

GUESS WHO THERE COSTARS in a telenovela are. The lead actress was taunting a production staff member, "Ingat ka sa akin, ha?" within earshot of the supporting actress. LO, costumed actress really meant for SA but she just downplayed it by directing it to someone else.

Insiders attest that SA is on pre-insecure with LA and her effort to befriend LA are all for show. Looks like the plot continues to thicken off-cam.

Gawad Tanglaw awardees

I am still in a euphoric state after bagging the Gawad Tanglaw award for Best Entertainment Columnist. What an honor to be chosen by journalists, deans, scholars and distinguished members of the academe! It's so humbling to know that they put up CT out of their own passion for the arts.

They don't submit their opinions but they'll cast their own money for the animal commission. Invite to Anino Ang Bituon Flexione Lito and company for their tireless efforts in paying tribute to artists.

I don't know if my award to the women who taught me how to write my first word and who taught me how to use it as and write true—my mom, the late poet Inday Badoy.

Here are the major awardees of the 6th Gawad Tanglaw para sa Sining at Bayan:

Best Films: "Nasaan Ka Elsa" (Seiko Films), "Tribu" (A Glass Production Inc.) and "Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo" (Star Cinema).

Lifetime Achievement Award: Carlo J. Caparas

Best Actor: Sid Lucero ("Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo")

Best Supporting Actor: Michael De Mesa ("Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo") and Freddie Garcia ("Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo")

Best Actress: Charry Pie Pineda ("Nasaan Ka Elsa") and Angelica Panganiban ("Nasaan Ka Elsa")

Best Supporting Actress: Eugene Domingo ("Nasaan Ka Elsa") and Ces Quesada ("Nasaan Ka Elsa")

Best Director: Dante Mendoza ("Nasaan Ka Elsa"), Jun Lifamante ("Tribu"), Jun Lumbao Reyes ("Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo")

Best Public Service Program: "Wish Ko Lang"

Outstanding Movie Producer: Bobbit Tan

Bowl of cherries

I asked actress not-yet-Cherrie Pie Picache what the hardest scene in the movie was that she had to do with Sid Lucero. She said, "Almost all the scenes that I was told not to act," she said. "So 17 years of what I learned in acting were thrown away." But with Picache's brilliance, we say it a heart of cherries.

DOLLY WOOD
Dolly Anne Carvajal

First time

When one of Regine Dimaculangan's GT media freaks, everyone broke into laughter when she said, "First time mag-manalo ng Best Supporting Actress for two movies, Ate ha. At first time din mag-mahang sa medal. Sana pahiram ng award Tanglaw ang medal para kunan pahiram ng picture. Ha? Medal. The poor comedy taste of them!

Twin boys

Meiky Morales is due to give birth to her twin boys in two weeks time but the really made an effort to attend the GT rites.

"This award is meaningful because it comes from readers. Malaki ang respeto ko sa mga pare-pareho din ang pinagdaanang magulang nanin and they share our attitude," she noted. Hubby **Ring Reyna** was proudly taking pics of his Queen.

Like father

Sid Lucero dedicated his award to his mom Ring Reyna and who was in the audience with his GF "Pixie's nothing more honorable than getting an award from respectable people," he said in his acceptance speech. Sid undoubtedly took after his dad's (Mark Joel) acting genes.

Art attack

Carole Ann Carvajal's exhibit "Homecoming" at Heritage Art Center (4th Level, Bldg. A, Megaball) till March 7. Home is where Calapal's art is.

Gutierrez Tumcodong's exhibit pays homage to Animalia-ilia at Gallery Art Works, Session, 2nd level, The Peak. Ode in Jal Zoolabel

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